An Introduction to Indian Art

Part I

Textbook in Fine Arts
for Class XI

© NCERT
not to be republished

11144

विद्ययाऽमृतमश्नुते

एन सी ई आर टी
NCERT

राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

Reprint 2026-27

11144 – An Introduction to Indian Art
Textbook for Class XI

ISBN- 978-93-5007-187-8

First Edition
September 2012 Asvina 1934

Reprinted
August 2015 Shravana 1937
February 2018, Magha 1939
April 2019, Chaitra 1941
August 2019 Shravana 1941
April 2021, Chaitra 1943
December 2021, Agrahayana 1943
October 2022, Kartika 1944
March 2024, Chaitra 1946
January 2025, Pausha 1946
February 2026, Phalguna 1947

PD 20T BS

© National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2012

₹ 135.00

Printed on 80 GSM paper with NCERT watermark

Published at the Publication Division by the Secretary, National Council of Educational Research and Training, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi 110 016 and printed at Pushpak Press (P) Ltd 203-204, DSIDC Sheds, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-I, New Delhi- 110 020

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

- No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.
- This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise disposed of without the publisher's consent, in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published.
- The correct price of this publication is the price printed on this page, Any revised price indicated by a rubber stamp or by a sticker or by any other means is incorrect and should be unacceptable.

OFFICES OF THE PUBLICATION DIVISION, NCERT

NCERT Campus
Sri Aurobindo Marg
New Delhi 110 016 **Phone : 011-26562708**

108, 100 Feet Road
Hosdakere Halli Extension
Banashankari III Stage
Bangaluru 560 085 **Phone : 080-26725740**

Navjivan Trust Building
P.O.Navjivan
Ahmedabad 380 014 **Phone : 079-27541446**

CWC Campus
Opp. Dhankal Bus Stop
Panihati
Kolkata 700 114 **Phone : 033-25530454**

CWC Complex
Maligaon
Guwahati 781 021 **Phone : 0361-2674869**

© NCERT not to be republished

Publication Team

Head, Publication Division	:	*M.V. Srinivasan*
Chief Editor	:	*Bijnan Sutar*
Chief Business Manager	:	*Amitabh Kumar*
Chief Production Officer (In charge)	:	*Deepak Jaiswal*
Editorial Assistant	:	*Mathew John*
Assistant Production Officer	:	*Sayuraj A.R.*

Cover
Surender Kumar

Layout
Seema Srivastava

FOREWORD

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has constantly been working for the past fifty years to bring in an impact on the country's school educational system. In the recent years, specially with the *National Curriculum Framework* (NCF) - 2005, there has been a significant shift in the development of textbooks, their presentation and inter-disciplinary approach, the typology of exercises, etc. All these efforts have made the textbooks child friendly. At the senior secondary stage, which is also the school leaving stage, students should have more options to move further in different fields of higher education or professional education. With this view, the NCERT for the first time took the initiatives of developing the curriculum and syllabi in different art related areas for this stage.

At this stage of education, the emphasis has been given to a professional approach towards the subject of Fine Arts making it a discipline rather than on creating awareness and knowledge, which was generic in nature till secondary classes. The teaching objectives also shift towards sharpening of skills in fine arts and develop a perspective of design and instead of free expression and doing arts emphasis is on students' expressing themselves in their own style and medium. Also, there has been a need to develop a historical perspective of art in context of the world as well as India. Art History is a part of studies of arts and in itself it is a major area of education from which students learn about their cultural heritage.

It was observed that many of the education boards offer Fine Arts as an optional subject at the senior secondary stage which includes painting, sculpture, applied arts or commercial arts. These were reviewed and a new syllabus was formed. Since this course apart from the practical component include theory which introduces students to the art historical heritage of country's diverse art and architecture, the textbook 'An Introduction to Indian Art' has been developed for Classes XI and XII.

The textbook for Class XI extensively covers the tradition of cave paintings in the pre-historic era and their continuation in mural paintings of Buddhist era and later

© NCERT not to be republished

Reprint 2026-27

on in various parts of the country, Buddhist, Jain and Hindu sculptural and architectural developments. During the Indo-Islamic period and before the Mughal rule, another era dawned upon India, which saw massive constructions in the form of forts and palaces. Different aspects of all these styles have been discussed to introduce students with the fabric of India's culture.

The NCERT appreciates the hard work done by the Textbook Development Committee responsible for making this book. We wish to thank the Chief Advisor for this textbook, Professor Ratan Parimoo, Retired Head, Department of Art History and Dean, Faculty of Fine Arts, M. S. University of Baroda, for guiding the work of this committee. It was a challenge for other art historians involved in making of this textbook for students at the school level and their efforts are praiseworthy. We are indebted to the institutions and organisations which have generously permitted us to draw upon their resource materials and personnel. We are especially grateful to the members of the National Monitoring Committee, appointed by the Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development under the Chairpersonship of Professor Mrinal Miri and Professor G.P. Deshpande, for their valuable time and contribution. As an organisation committed to the systemic reform and continuous improvement in the quality of its products, NCERT welcomes comments and suggestions which will enable us to undertake further revision and refinement.

Director
National Council of Educational
Research and Training

New Delhi
September 2012

© NCERT not to be republished

Reprint 2026-27

PREFACE

During the nineteenth century (the period of British rule), a few British colonial officers took active interest to study India's past in collaboration with some Indian scholars and it is out of such endeavours that a systematic study of architectural monuments, sculptures and paintings began in the Indian sub-continent. The first attempt in this regard was to document the monuments as they represented a very visible evidence of the bygone era. Over a period of time with the archaeological explorations and excavations, many art-historical sites were discovered. Decipherment of inscriptions and study of coins played a significant role in our understanding of the past art traditions. With the study of religious texts, history of religion was studied and identification of icons/sculptures and paintings was initiated, which became a dominant area of early scholarship. Study of art history has developed in association with the archaeological studies, however, it is now recognised as a specialised discipline. In the West, mainly in Europe, the art-historical discipline has grown considerably with numerous methodological inputs, whereas in India it is still in the process of developing its investigating mechanisms.

As the study of art history has grown out of extensive documentations and excavations, one finds description of art objects as a prominent method of study. There are a few significant studies of the early twentieth century, where the concerns are addressed beyond mere description. Subsequently, several generations of outstanding Western and Indian scholars of Indian art history have studied the subject at great depth making us realise the glorious past of the Indian civilisation through its creations reflected in the architectural monuments, sculptures and paintings. We can claim a distinct Indian approach to the arts of the building edifices, the sculpture making and the language of painting in comparison with the European art on one hand and the far Eastern art on the other. Therefore, the Indian art historical studies have emerged as a prestigious academic discipline at a university level education.

© NCERT not to be republished

Reprint 2026-27

The stylistic features of various monuments and sculptures have been attributed to the dynastic affiliations, like the Mauryan art, Satavahana art, Gupta art, etc. Alternatively, the periodisations of art follows religious denominations, such as the Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic periods. However, such deterministic nomenclatures are only partially useful for understanding the art traditions.

Often the study of art objects is based on two important approaches, (i) formalistic or stylistic analysis and (ii) content and contextual studies. The first category involves the study of formalistic characteristics of architecture/sculpture/paintings, whereas, the second category concentrates at various levels of content analysis, which has several components, such as iconographic study, iconology, narrative and semiotics.

Iconography involves identification of images through certain symbols/signs and relevant myths or narrative episodes, whereas, iconology involves the study of the evolution of such signs and symbols in its historical, social and philosophical context. Today, the methodological framework tries to explore various concerns and issues in the process of art productions and attempts to go beyond the traditional meanings. It may be observed that the political intentions of various religious ideologies are yet to become a part of the larger investigative process. Religious ideologies were also instrumental in shaping the social and economic formulations in ancient India. Therefore, it becomes important to study such factors that have influenced art forms. Large body of material has come from the religious sites but it does not mean that there was no art in non-religious domains. Terracotta figurines are the best examples in this category, however, due to space constraint they have been only mentioned but not extensively discussed. In the present text, the authors have tried to move away from the normative traditional descriptive writings to broader development of art and architectural monuments in terms of their stylistic developments, as well as, their social and political affiliations.

Cultural manifestations have diverse ideologies in the form of architecture, sculpture and paintings. They need to be studied with their religious and social viewpoints, hence, unilinear projection of the cultural tradition needs to be reconsidered as it is away from realities of the ancient past. Different categories of artisans existed in the actual working situation. A guild of artisans may have been employed by the religious and political authorities for making monuments and accordingly the artisans had to work and devise their execution techniques along with

© NCERT not to be republished

Reprint 2026-27

necessary innovations, etc. In this textbook only an introductory outline has been attempted from pre- and proto-historic times till the times of the Islamic monuments during the late medieval period.

Considering the level of the young generation readers belonging to the higher secondary stage, the present book outlines a few examples to create an understanding of the nature of developments in Indian art. It is not intended to discard such examples which we know are important but all the contributors have made a conscious attempt to present convincing holistic pictures. The chapters in the book provide an outline of different forms of arts from most of the regions of the country.

Human civilisation begins with the emergence of the human beings on the earth. In this book, a simpler but at the same time a distinct vocabulary has been introduced. The idea is not only to present the vast amount of data available but also to generate interest in understanding the visual traditions of Indian art. For any student of fine arts, it is necessary to be aware of the visual tradition in the past so as to understand the present art production. Understanding of visual tradition enriches visual understanding. Hope the young minds find the book enriching as is intended.

© NCERT not to be republished

Reprint 2026-27

THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a [1]**[SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC]** and to secure to all its citizens :

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the [2][unity and integrity of the Nation];

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949 do **HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.**

---

1. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Sovereign Democratic Republic" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)
2. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Unity of the Nation" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)

Reprint 2026-27

TEXTBOOK DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Chief Advisor

Ratan Parimoo, *Professor and Dean (Retd.)*, Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University of Baroda

Advisor

Y.S. Alone, *Assistant Professor*, School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Members

K.C. Chitrabhanu, *Professor of Art History (Retd.)*, Government College of Fine Arts, Thiruvananthapuram

Naman Ahuja, *Associate Professor*, School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Seema S. Ojha, *Assistant Professor*, History
Department of Education in Social Sciences, NCERT, New Delhi

Shama Mitra Chenoy, *Associate Professor*, History, Shivaji College, University of Delhi

Suchita Raut, *PGT (Fine Arts)*, Delhi Public School, Bhopal

Santosh Jain, *Head*, Department of Painting, Delhi Public School, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi

Member Coordinator

Jyotsna Tiwari, *Associate Professor*, Department of Education in Arts and Aesthetics, NCERT, New Delhi

© NCERT
not to be republished

Reprint 2026-27

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are thankful to Ratan Parimoo, *Chief Advisor*, Y.S. Alone, *Advisor,* and all members of the Textbook Development Committee for bringing out this textbook to its present form. Apart from them, various people and institutions have been directly or indirectly involved in the development of the syllabus and the textbook, we are grateful to all of them. We especially acknowledge the efforts of Surendra Kaul, the then *Director General*, Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT), who generously permitted us to draw upon the resources of CCRT.

We are thankful to V.K. Jain, *Professor* (Retd.), Moti Lal Nehru College, Delhi University, for giving his valuable time and suggestions during the review of the textbook. Also, we thank, Vijayam Sankaranarayan, *Editor (Retd.)* and Shveta Uppal, *Chief Editor,* Publication Division, NCERT, for going through the manuscript and giving their valuable suggestions.

Special thanks are due to Surender Kumar and Tanveer Ahmed, *DTP Operators*, Publication Division, NCERT.

© NCERT not to be republished

Reprint 2026-27

CONTENTS

FOREWORD *iii*

PREFACE *v*

1. Prehistoric Rock Paintings 1
2. Arts of the Indus Valley 9
3. Arts of the Mauryan Period 19
4. Post-Mauryan Trends in Indian Art and Architecture 27
5. Later Mural Traditions 61
6. Temple Architecture and Sculpture 69
7. Indian Bronze Sculpture 103
8. Some Aspects of Indo-Islamic Architecture 109

GLOSSARY 126

© NCERT not to be republished

Reprint 2026-27

Map showing prehistoric sites
(Outline map not to scale)

Reprint 2026-27

1

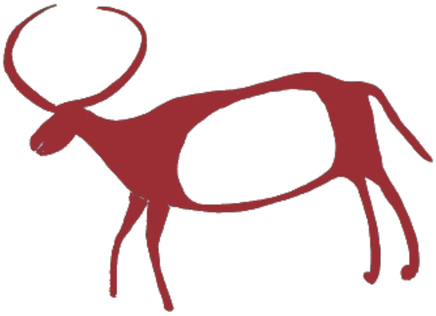
Prehistoric Rock Paintings

THE distant past when there was no paper or language or the written word, and hence no books or written documents, is called prehistory or as we often say, prehistoric times. How people lived in those times was difficult to surmise until scholars began to discover the places where prehistoric people lived. Excavation at these places brought to light old tools, pottery, habitats, bones of ancient human beings and animals, and drawings on cave walls. By piecing together the information deduced from these objects and the cave drawings, scholars have constructed fairly accurate knowledge about what happened and how people lived in prehistoric times. When the basic needs of food, water, clothing and shelter were fulfilled people felt the need to express themselves. Painting and drawing were the oldest art forms practised by human beings to express themselves, using the cave walls as their canvas.

Why did prehistoric people draw these pictures? They may have drawn and painted to make their shelters more colourful and beautiful or to keep a visual record of their day-to-day life, like some of us who maintain a diary.

> The prehistoric period in the early development of human beings is commonly known as the Old Stone Age or the Palaeolithic Age.

Prehistoric paintings have been found in many parts of the world. We do not really know if Lower Palaeolithic people ever produced any art objects. But by the Upper Palaeolithic times we see a proliferation of artistic activities. Around the world the walls of many caves of this time are full of finely carved and painted pictures of animals which the cave-dwellers hunted. The subjects of their drawings were human figures, human activities, geometric designs and animal symbols. In India the earliest paintings have been reported from the Upper Palaeolithic times.



© NCERT not to be republished

Reprint 2026-27

It is interesting to know that the first discovery of rock paintings was made in India in 1867–68 by an archaeologist, Archibold Carlleyle, twelve years before the discovery of Altamira in Spain. Cockburn, Anderson, Mitra and Ghosh were the early archaeologists who discovered a large number of sites in the Indian sub-continent.

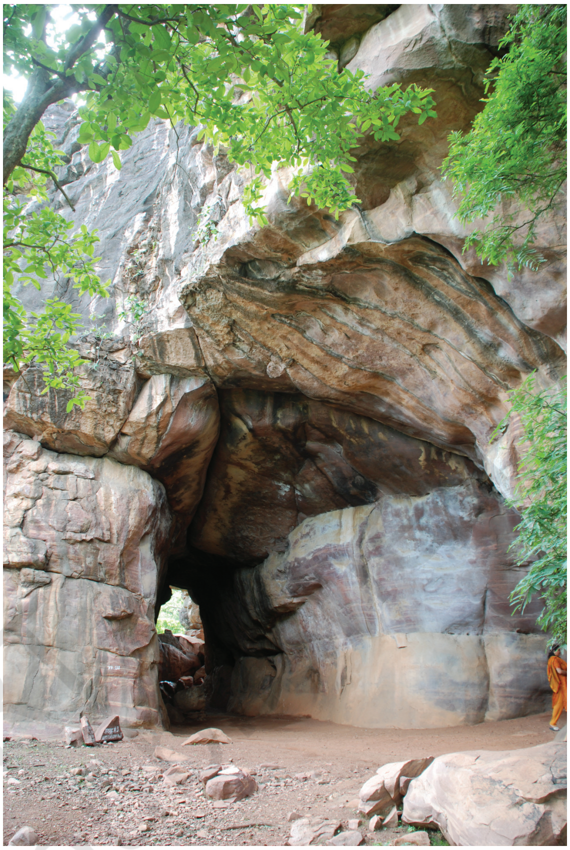
Remnants of rock paintings have been found on the walls of the caves situated in several districts of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Bihar. Some paintings have been reported from the Kumaon hills in Uttarakhand also. The rock shelters on banks of the River Suyal at Lakhudiyar, about twenty kilometres on the Almora–Barechina road, bear these prehistoric paintings. Lakhudiyar literally means one lakh caves.The paintings here can be divided into three categories: man, animal and geometric patterns in white, black and red ochre. Humans are represented in stick-like forms. A long-snouted animal, a fox and a multiple legged lizard are the main animal motifs. Wavy lines, rectangle-filled geometric designs, and groups of dots can also be seen here. One of the interesting scenes depicted here is of hand-linked dancing human figures. There is some superimposition of paintings. The earliest are in black; over these are red ochre paintings and the last group comprises white paintings. From Kashmir two slabs with engravings have been reported. The granite rocks of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh provided suitable canvases to the Neolithic man for his paintings. There are several such sites but more famous among them are Kupgallu, Piklihal and Tekkalkota. Three types of paintings have been reported from here—paintings in white, paintings in red ochre over a white background and paintings in red ochre. These

Hand-linked dancing figures, Lakhudiyar, Uttarakhand

Wavy lines, Lakhudiyar, Uttarakhand

paintings belong to late historical, early historical and Neolithic periods. The subjects depicted are bulls, elephants, sambhars, gazelles, sheep, goats, horses, stylised humans, tridents, but rarely, vegetal motifs.

But the richest paintings are reported from the Vindhya ranges of Madhya Pradesh and their Kaimurean extensions into Uttar Pradesh. These hill ranges are full of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic remains, and they are also full of forests, wild plants, fruits, streams and creeks, thus a perfect place for Stone Age people to live. Among these the largest and most spectacular rock-shelter is located in the Vindhya hills at Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh. Bhimbetka is located forty-five kilometres south of Bhopal, in an area of ten square kilometres, having about eight hundred rock shelters, five hundred of which bear paintings.



Cave entrance, Bhimbetka, Madhya Pradesh

The caves of Bhimbetka were discovered in 1957–58 by eminent archaeologist V.S. Wakankar and later on many more were discovered. Wakankar spent several years in surveying these inaccessible hills and jungles to study these paintings.

The themes of paintings found here are of great variety, ranging from mundane events of daily life in those times to sacred and royal images. These include hunting, dancing, music, horse and elephant riders, animal fighting, honey collection, decoration of bodies, and other household scenes.

The rock art of Bhimbetka has been classified into various groups on the bases of style, technique and superimposition. The drawings and paintings can be catagorised into seven historical periods. Period I, Upper Palaeolithic; Period II, Mesolithic; and Period III, Chalcolithic. After Period III there are four successive periods. But we will confine ourselves here only to the first three phases.

Can you figure out what the artist is trying to depict in this painting?

Upper Palaeolithic Period

The paintings of the Upper Palaeolithic phase are linear representations, in green and dark red, of huge animal figures, such as bisons, elephants, tigers, rhinos and boars besides stick-like human figures. A few are wash paintings but mostly they are filled with

© NCERT not to be republished

Reprint 2026-27

geometric patterns. The green paintings are of dancers and the red ones of hunters.

Mesolithic Period

The largest number of paintings belong to Period II that covers the Mesolithic paintings. During this period the themes are multiple but the paintings are smaller in size. Hunting scenes predominate. The hunting scenes depict people hunting in groups, armed with barbed spears, pointed sticks, arrows and bows. In some paintings these primitive men are shown with traps and snares probably to catch animals. The hunters are shown wearing simple clothes and ornaments. Sometimes, men have been adorned with elaborate head-dresses, and sometimes painted with masks also. Elephant, bison, tiger, boar, deer, antelope, leopard, panther, rhinoceros, fish, frog, lizard, squirrel and at times birds are also depicted. The Mesolithic artists loved to paint animals. In some pictures, animals are chasing men. In others they are being chased and hunted by men. Some of the animal paintings, especially in the hunting scenes, show a fear of animals, but many others show a feeling of tenderness and love for them. There are also a few engravings representing mainly animals.

Though animals were painted in a naturalistic style, humans were depicted only in a stylistic manner. Women are painted both in the nude and clothed. The young and the old equally find place in these paintings. Children are painted running, jumping and playing. Community dances provide a common theme. There are paintings of people gathering fruit or honey from trees, and of women grinding and preparing food. Some of the pictures of men, women and children seem to depict a sort of family life. In many of the rock-shelters we find hand prints, fist prints, and dots made by the fingertips.

One of the few images showing only one animal, Bhimbetka

The artists of Bhimbetka used many colours, including various shades of white, yellow, orange, red ochre, purple, brown, green and black. But white and red were their favourite colours. The paints were made by grinding various rocks and minerals. They got red from haematite (known as *geru* in India). The green came from a green variety of a stone called chalcedony. White might have been

© NCERT not to be republished

made out of limestone. The rock of mineral was first ground into a powder. This may then have been mixed with water and also with some thick or sticky substance such as animal fat or gum or resin from trees. Brushes were made of plant fibre. What is amazing is that these colours have survived thousands of years of adverse weather conditions. It is believed that the colours have remained intact because of the chemical reaction of the oxide present on the surface of the rocks.

Painting showing a man being hunted by a beast, Bhimbetka

The artists here made their paintings on the walls and ceilings of the rock shelters. Some of the paintings are reported from the shelters where people lived. But some others were made in places which do not seem to have been living spaces at all. Perhaps these places had some religious importance. Some of the most beautiful paintings are very high up on rock shelters or close to the ceilings of rock-shelters. One may wonder why early human beings chose to paint on a rock in such an uncomfortable position. The paintings made at these places were perhaps for people to be able to notice them from a distance.

Why has the animal been shown so big and man so small?

The paintings, though from the remote past, do not lack pictorial quality. Despite various limitations such as acute working conditions, inadequate tools, materials, etc., there is a charm of simple rendering of scenes of the environment in which the artists lived. The men shown in them appear adventurous and rejoicing in their lives. The animals are shown more youthful and majestic than perhaps they actually were. The primitive artists seem to possess an intrinsic passion for storytelling. These pictures depict, in a dramatic way, both men and animals engaged in the struggle for survival. In one of the scenes, a group of people have been shown hunting a bison. In the process, some injured men are depicted lying scattered on the ground. In another scene, an animal is shown in the agony of death and the men are depicted dancing. These kinds of paintings might have given man a sense of power over the animals he would meet in the open.

This practice is common among primitive people of today also. They engrave or paint on rocks as part of the rituals they perform at birth, at death, at coming of age and at the time of marriage. They dance, masked, during hunting rites to help them kill animals difficult to find or kill.

© NCERT not to be republished

HUNTING SCENE

Hunting scenes predominate in Mesolithic paintings. This is one such scene where a group of people are shown hunting a bison. Some injured men are depicted lying scattered on the ground. These paintings show mastery in the skill of drawing these forms.

DANCING SCENE

In this picture hand-linked figures in dancing mode are shown. In fact, this is a recurrent theme. It also recalls the dancing scene from the Lakhudiyar rock painting found in Uttarakhand.

The paintings of individual animals show the mastery of skill of the primitive artist in drawing these forms. Both, proportion and tonal effect, have been realistically maintained in them.

It is interesting to note that at many rock-art sites often a new painting is painted on top of an older painting. At Bhimbetka, in some places, there are as many as 20 layers of paintings, one on top of another. Why did the artists paint in the same place again and again? Maybe, this was because the artist did not like his creation and painted another painting on the previous one, or some of the paintings and places were considered sacred or special or this was because the area may have been used by different generations of people at different times.

These prehistoric paintings help us to understand about early human beings, their lifestyle, their food habits, their daily activities and, above all, they help us understand their mind—the way they thought. Prehistoric period remains are a great witness to the evolution of human civilisation, through the numerous rock weapons, tools, ceramics and bones. More than anything else, the rock paintings are the greatest wealth the primitive human beings of this period left behind.

EXERCISE

1. According to your observation how did the people of prehistoric times select themes for their paintings?
2. What could have been the reasons for depicting more animal figures than human figures in cave paintings?
3. Many visuals of prehistoric cave paintings have been given in this chapter. Among these which one do you like the most and why? Give a critical appreciation of the visual.
4. Other than Bhimbetka, which are the other major sites where these prehistoric paintings have been found? Prepare a report on different aspects of these paintings with pictures or line drawings.
5. In modern times, how have walls been used as a surface to make paintings, graphics, etc?

© NCERT not to be republished

Reprint 2026-27

Map of Indus Valley sites

(Outline map not to scale)

© NCERT not to be republished

2 Arts of the Indus Valley

THE arts of the Indus Valley Civilisation emerged during the second half of the third millennium BCE. The forms of art found from various sites of the civilisation include sculptures, seals, pottery, jewellery, terracotta figures, etc. The artists of that time surely had fine artistic sensibilities and a vivid imagination. Their delineation of human and animal figures was highly realistic in nature, since the anatomical details included in them were unique, and, in the case of terracotta art, the modelling of animal figures was done in an extremely careful manner.

The two major sites of the Indus Valley Civilisation, along the Indus river—the cities of Harappa in the north and Mohenjodaro in the south—showcase one of earliest examples of civic planning. Other markers were houses, markets, storage facilities, offices, public baths, etc., arranged in a grid-like pattern. There was also a highly developed drainage system. While Harappa and Mohenjodaro are situated in Pakistan, the important sites excavated in India are Lothal and Dholavira in Gujarat, Rakhigarhi in Haryana, Ropar in Punjab, Kalibangan in Rajasthan, etc.

Stone Statues

Statues whether in stone, bronze or terracotta found in Harappan sites are not abundant, but refined. The stone statuaries found at Harappa and Mohenjodaro are excellent examples of handling three-dimensional volumes. In stone are two male figures—one is a torso in red sandstone and the other is a bust of a bearded man in soapstone—which are extensively discussed.

The figure of the bearded man, interpreted as a priest, is draped in a shawl coming under the right arm and covering the left shoulder. This shawl is decorated with trefoil patterns. The eyes are a little elongated, and half-closed as in meditative concentration. The nose is well formed and of medium

Bust of a bearded priest

© NCERT not to be republished

size; the mouth is of average size with close-cut moustache and a short beard and whiskers; the ears resemble double shells with a hole in the middle. The hair is parted in the middle, and a plain woven fillet is passed round the head. An armlet is worn on the right hand and holes around the neck suggest a necklace.

Bronze casting techniques of the same nature are practised even now in many parts of the country, having a continuous tradition.

Bronze Casting

The art of bronze-casting was practised on a wide scale by the Harappans. Their bronze statues were made using the 'lost wax' technique in which the wax figures were first covered with a coating of clay and allowed to dry. Then the wax was heated and the molten wax was drained out through a tiny hole made in the clay cover. The hollow mould thus created was filled with molten metal which took the original shape of the object. Once the metal cooled, the clay cover was completely removed. In bronze we find human as well as animal figures, the best example of the former being the statue of a girl popularly titled 'Dancing Girl'. Amongst animal figures in bronze the buffalo with its uplifted head, back and sweeping horns and the goat are of artistic merit. Bronze casting was popular at all the major centres of the Indus Valley Civilisation. The copper dog and bird of Lothal and the bronze figure of a bull from Kalibangan are in no way inferior to the human figures of copper and bronze from Harappa and Mohenjodaro. Metal-casting appears to be a continuous tradition. The late Harappan and Chalcolithic sites like Daimabad in Maharashtra yielded excellent examples of metal-cast

Mother goddess, terracotta

A terracotta figurine

© NCERT not to be republished

sculptures. They mainly consist of human and animal figures. It shows how the tradition of figure sculpture continued down the ages.

Terracotta

The Indus Valley people made terracotta images also but compared to the stone and bronze statues the terracotta representations of human form are crude in the Indus Valley. They are more realistic in Gujarat sites and Kalibangan. The most important among the Indus figures are those representing the mother goddess. In terracotta, we also find a few figurines of bearded males with coiled hair, their posture rigidly upright, legs slightly apart, and the arms parallel to the sides of the body. The repetition of this figure in exactly the same position would suggest that he was a deity. A terracotta mask of a horned deity has also been found. Toy carts with wheels, whistles, rattles, birds and animals, gamesmen and discs were also rendered in terracotta.

Terracotta

Seals

Archaeologists have discovered thousands of seals, mostly made of steatite, and occasionally of agate, chert, copper, faience and terracotta, with beautiful figures of animals, such as unicorn bull, rhinoceros, tiger, elephant, bison, goat, buffalo, etc. The realistic rendering of these animals in various moods is remarkable. The purpose of producing seals was mainly commercial. It appears that the seals were also used as amulets, carried on the persons of their owners, perhaps as modern-day identity cards. The standard Harappan seal was a square plaque 2×2 square inches, made from steatite. Every seal is engraved in a pictographic script which is yet to be deciphered. Some seals have also been found in ivory. They all bear a great variety of motifs, most often of animals including those of the bull, with or without the hump, the elephant, tiger,

© NCERT not to be republished

Reprint 2026-27

Unicorn seals

goat and also monsters. Sometimes trees or human figures were also depicted. The most remarkable seal is the one depicted with a figure in the centre and animals around. This seal is generally identified as the Pashupati Seal by some scholars whereas some identify it as the female deity. This seal depicts a human figure seated cross-legged. An elephant and a tiger are depicted to the right side of the seated figure, while on the left a rhinoceros and a buffalo are seen. In addition to these animals two antelopes are shown below the seat. Seals such as these date from between 2500 and 1900 BCE and were found in considerable numbers in sites such as the ancient city of Mohenjodaro in the Indus Valley. Figures and animals are carved in intaglio on their surfaces.

Pashupati seal/female deity

Square or rectangular copper tablets, with an animal or a human figure on one side and an inscription on the other, or an inscription on both sides have also been found. The figures and signs are carefully cut with a burin. These copper tablets appear to have been amulets. Unlike inscriptions on seals which vary in each case, inscriptions on the copper tablets seem to be associated with the animals portrayed on them.

© NCERT be republished

Pottery

A large quantity of pottery excavated from the sites, enable us to understand the gradual evolution of various design motifs as employed in different shapes, and styles. The Indus Valley pottery consists chiefly of very fine wheel-made wares, very few being hand-made. Plain pottery is more common than painted ware. Plain pottery is generally of red clay, with or without a fine red or grey slip. It includes knobbed ware, ornamented with rows of knobs. The black painted ware has a fine coating of red slip on which geometric and animal designs are executed in glossy black paint.

Polychrome pottery is rare and mainly comprises small vases decorated with geometric patterns in red, black, and green, rarely white and yellow. Incised ware is also rare and the incised decoration was confined to the bases of the pans, always inside and to the dishes of offering stands. Perforated pottery includes a large hole at the bottom and small holes all over the wall, and was probably used for straining beverages. Pottery for household purposes is found in as many shapes and sizes as could be conceived of for daily practical use. Straight and angular shapes are an exception, while graceful curves are the rule. Miniature vessels, mostly less than half an inch in height are, particularly, so marvellously crafted as to evoke admiration.

Beads and Ornaments

The Harappan men and women decorated themselves with a large variety of ornaments produced from every conceivable material ranging from precious metals and gemstones to bone and baked clay. While necklaces, fillets, armlets and finger-rings were commonly worn by both

Perforated pot

Pottery

© NCERT not to be republished

sexes, women wore girdles, earrings and anklets. Hoards of jewellery found at Mohenjodaro and Lothal include necklaces of gold and semi-precious stones, copper bracelets and beads, gold earrings and head ornaments, faience pendants and buttons, and beads of steatite and gemstones. All ornaments are well crafted. It may be noted that a cemetery has been found at Farmana in Haryana where dead bodies were buried with ornaments.

The bead industry seems to have been well developed as evident from the factories discovered at Chanhudaro and Lothal. Beads were made of carnelian, amethyst, jasper, crystal, quartz, steatite, turquoise, lapis lazuli, etc. Metals like copper, bronze and gold, and shell, faience and terracotta or burnt clay were also used for manufacturing beads. The beads are in varying shapes—disc-shaped, cylindrical, spherical, barrel-shaped, and segmented. Some beads were made of two or more stones cemented together, some of stone with gold covers. Some were decorated by incising or painting and some had designs etched onto them. Great technical skill has been displayed in the manufacture of these beads.

The Harappan people also made brilliantly naturalistic models of animals, especially monkeys and squirrels, used as pin-heads and beads.

It is evident from the discovery of a large number of spindles and spindle whorls in the houses of the Indus

NCERT not to be republished

Beadwork and jewellery items

Valley that spinning of cotton and wool was very common. Spinning is indicated by finds of whorls made of the expensive faience as also of the cheap pottery and shell. Men and women wore two separate pieces of attire similar to the *dhoti* and shawl. The shawl covered the left shoulder passing below the right shoulder.

From archaeological finds it appears that the people of the Indus Valley were conscious of fashion. Different hairstyles were in vogue and wearing of a beard was popular among all. Cinnabar was used as a cosmetic and face-paint, lipstick and collyrium (eyeliner) were also known to them. Many stone structural remains are also found at Dholavira which show how the Indus Valley people used stone in construction.

The artists and craftsmen of the Indus Valley were extremely skilled in a variety of crafts—metal casting, stone carving, making and painting pottery and making terracotta images using simplified motifs of animals, plants and birds.

Terracotta toys

EXERCISE

1. Would you agree that the people of the Indus Valley Civilisation were great art lovers? Give reasons for your answer.
2. What kind of similarities and differences do you find between present-day terracotta and the Indus Valley terracotta?
3. Seals were made of different materials. With the Indus Valley seals as a reference try to make seals with a different medium. Which are the animals that you would like to carve on your seals and why?
4. What do the art objects that have survived tell us about the daily life of the people of the Indus Valley Civilisation?
5. Imagine you are a curator working in a museum and you have been given the task to create a museum exhibit on Indus art. Collect illustrations of at least ten objects made of stone, metal and terracotta produced and used during the Indus Valley Civilisation and create this exhibit.

© NCERT not to be republished

Reprint 2026-27

DANCING GIRL

One of the best known artefacts from the Indus Valley is this approximately four-inch-high copper figure of a dancing girl. Found in Mohenjodaro, this exquisite casting depicts a girl whose long hair is tied in a bun. Bangles cover her left arm, a bracelet and an amulet or bangle adorn her right arm, and a cowry shell necklace is seen around her neck. Her right hand is on her hip and her left hand is clasped in a traditional Indian dance gesture. She has large eyes and flat nose. This figure is full of expression and bodily vigour and conveys a lot of information.

BULL

This bronze figure of a bull from Mohenjodaro deserves mention. The massiveness of the bull and the fury of the charge are eloquently expressed. The animal is shown standing with his head turned to the right and with a cord around the neck.

Male Torso

In this red sandstone figure, there are socket holes in the neck and shoulders for the attachment of head and arms. The frontal posture of the torso has been consciously adopted. The shoulders are well baked and the abdomen slightly prominent.

Painted Earthen Jar

Found in Mohenjodaro, this jar is made on a potter's wheel with clay. The shape was manipulated by the pressure of the crafty fingers of the potter. After baking the clay model, it was painted with black colour. High polishing was done as a finishing touch. The motifs are of vegetals and geometric forms. Designs are simple but with a tendency towards abstraction.

Mother Goddess

The mother goddess figures are usually crude standing female figures adorned with necklaces hanging over prominent breasts and wearing a loin cloth and a girdle. The fan-shaped head-dress with a cup-like projection on each side is a distinct decorative feature of the mother goddess figures of the Indus Valley. The pellet eyes and beaked nose of the figures are very crude, and the mouth is indicated by a slit.

© NCERT not to be republished

© NCERT not to be republished

Map showing Mauryan sites

(Outline map not to scale)

11144CH03

3

ARTS OF THE MAURYAN PERIOD

SIXTH century BCE marks the beginning of new religious and social movements in the Gangetic valley in the form of Buddhism and Jainism which were part of the *shraman* tradition. Both religions became popular as they opposed the *varna* and *jati* systems of the Hindu religion. Magadha emerged as a powerful kingdom and consolidated its control over the other regions. By the fourth century BCE the Mauryas established their power and by the third century BCE, a large part of India was under Mauryan control. Ashoka emerged as the most powerful king of the Mauryan dynasty who patronised the Buddhist *shraman* tradition in the third century BCE. Religious practices had many dimensions and were not confined to just one particular mode of worship. Worship of *Yakshas* and mother-goddesses were prevalent during that time. So, multiple forms of worship existed. Nevertheless, Buddhism became the most popular social and religious movement. *Yaksha* worship was very popular before and after the advent of Buddhism and it was assimilated in Buddhism and Jainism.

Pillar capital and abacus with stylised lotus

Pillars, Sculptures and Rock-cut Architecture

Construction of *stupas* and *viharas* as part of monastic establishments became part of the Buddhist tradition. However, in this period, apart from *stupas* and *viharas*, stone pillars, rock-cut caves and monumental figure sculptures were carved at several places. The tradition of constructing pillars is very old and it may be observed that erection of pillars was prevalent in the Achamenian empire as well. But the Mauryan pillars are different from the Achamenian pillars. The Mauryan pillars are rock-cut pillars thus displaying the carver's skills, whereas the Achamenian pillars are constructed in pieces by a mason. Stone pillars were erected by Ashoka, which have been found in the north Indian part of the Mauryan Empire with inscriptions engraved on them. The top portion of the pillar was carved with capital figures like the bull, the lion, the elephant, etc. All the capital figures are vigorous

© NCERT not to be republished

and carved standing on a square or circular abacus. Abacuses are decorated with stylised lotuses. Some of the existing pillars with capital figures were found at Basarah-Bakhira, Lauriya-Nandangarh and Rampurva in Bihar, Sankisa and Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh.

The Mauryan pillar capital found at Sarnath popularly known as the Lion Capital is the finest example of Mauryan sculptural tradition. It is also our national emblem. It is carved with considerable care—voluminous roaring lion figures firmly standing on a circular abacus which is carved with the figures of a horse, a bull, a lion and an elephant in vigorous movement, executed with precision, showing considerable mastery in the sculptural techniques. This pillar capital symbolising *Dhammachakrapravartana* (the first sermon by the Buddha) has become a standard symbol of this great historical event in the life of the Buddha.

Monumental images of *Yaksha*, *Yakhinis* and animals, pillar columns with capital figures, rock-cut caves belonging to the third century BCE have been found in different parts of India. It shows the popularity of *Yaksha* worship and how it became part of figure representation in Buddhist and Jaina religious monuments.

Yaksha, Parkham

Large statues of *Yakshas* and *Yakhinis* are found at many places like Patna, Vidisha and Mathura. These monumental images are mostly in the standing position. One of the distinguishing elements in all these images is their polished surface. The depiction of faces is in full round with pronounced cheeks and physiognomic detail. One of the finest examples is a *Yakshi* figure from Didarganj, Patna, which is tall and well-built. It shows sensitivity towards depicting the human physique. The image has a polished surface.

Terracotta figurines show a very different delineation of the body as compared to the sculptures. Depiction of a monumental rock-cut elephant at Dhauli in Odisha shows modelling in round with linear rhythm. It also has Ashokan rock-edict. All these examples are remarkable in their execution of figure representation. The rock-cut cave carved at Barabar hills near Gaya in Bihar is known as the Lomus Rishi cave. The facade of the cave is decorated with the semicircular *chaitya* arch as the entrance. The elephant frieze carved in high relief on the *chaitya* arch shows considerable movement. The interior hall of this cave is rectangular with a circular chamber at the back. The entrance is located on the side wall of the hall. The cave was donated by Ashoka for the Ajivika sect. The Lomus Rishi cave is an example of this period. But many Buddhist caves of the subsequent periods were excavated in eastern and western India.

© NCERT not to be republished

Due to the popularity of Buddhism and Jainism, *stupas* and *viharas* were constructed on a large scale. However, there are also examples of a few Brahmanical gods in the sculptural representations. It is important to note that the *stupas* were constructed over the relics of the Buddha at Rajagraha, Vaishali, Vethadipa and Pava in Bihar, Kapilavastu, Allakappa and Ramagrama in Nepal, Kushinagar and Pippalvina in Uttar Pradesh. The textual tradition also mentions construction of various other *stupas* on the relics of the Buddha at several places including Avanti and Gandhara which are outside the Gangetic valley.

Stupa, *vihara* and *chaitya* are part of Buddhist and Jaina monastic complexes but the largest number belongs to the Buddhist religion. One of the examples of the structure of a *stupa* in the third century BCE is at Bairat in Rajasthan. The great *stupa* at Sanchi (which will be discussed later) was built with bricks during the time of Ashoka and later it was covered with stone and many new additions were made.

Subsequently many such *stupas* were constructed which shows the popularity of Buddhism. From the second century BCE onwards, we get many inscriptional evidences mentioning donors and, at times, their profession. The pattern of patronage has been a very collective one and there are very few examples of royal patronage. Patrons range from lay devotees to *gahapatis* and kings. Donations by the guilds are also mentioned at several sites. However, there are very few inscriptions mentioning the names of artisans such as Kanha at Pitalkhora and his disciple Balaka at Kondane caves in Maharashtra. Artisans' categories like stone carvers, goldsmiths, stone-polishers, carpenters, etc. are also mentioned in the inscriptions.

Elephant, Dhauli

Lomus Rishi cave-entrance detail

© NCERT not to be republished

Lion Capital, Sarnath

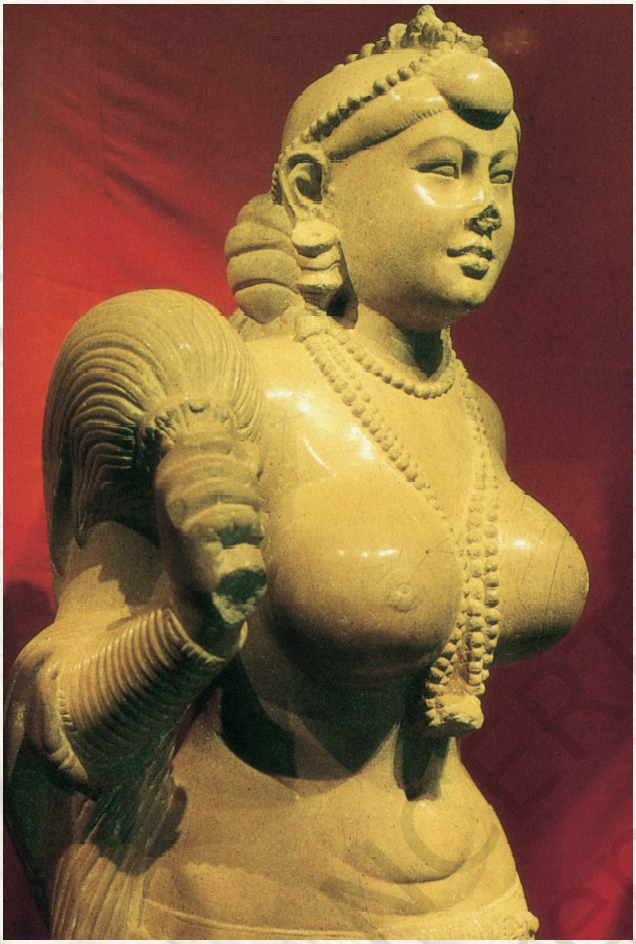
not to be republished

The Lion Capital discovered more than a hundred years ago at Sarnath, near Varanasi, is generally referred to as Sarnath Lion Capital. This is one of the finest examples of sculpture from the Mauryan period. Built in commemoration of the historical event of the first sermon or the *Dhammachakrapravartana* by the Buddha at Sarnath, the capital was built by Ashoka.

The capital originally consisted of five component parts: (i) the shaft (which is broken in many parts now), (ii) a lotus bell base, (iii) a drum on the bell base with four animals proceeding clockwise, (iv) the figures of four majestic addorsed lions, and (v) the crowning element, *Dharamchakra*, a large wheel, was also a part of this pillar. However, this wheel is lying in a broken condition and is displayed in the site museum at Sarnath. The capital without the crowning wheel and the lotus base has been adopted as the National Emblem of Independent India.

Now kept in the archaeological museum at Sarnath, the capital has four lions firmly seated back to back on a circular abacus. The lion figures of the capital are very impressive and massive. The monumentality of the image is easily noticeable. The facial musculature of the lions is very strong. The inversed lines of the lips and its subsequent effect of projection at the end of the lips show the sculptor's observation for naturalistic depiction. The lions appear as if they have held their breath. The lines of the mane are sharp and follow the conventions that were in practice during that time. The surface of the sculpture is heavily polished which is typical of the Mauryan Period. Their curly manes have protruding volume. The weight of the body of each lion is firmly shown by the stretched muscles of the feet. The abacus has the depiction of a *chakra* (wheel) having twenty-four spokes in all the four directions and a bull, a horse, an elephant and a lion between every *chakra* is finely carved. The motif of the *chakra* becomes significant as a representation of the *Dhammachkra* in the entire Buddhist art. Each animal figure, despite sticking to the surface, is voluminous, its posture creating movement in the circular abacus. Despite having limited space between each *chakra*, these animal figures display considerable command over the depiction of movement in a limited space. The circular abacus is supported by an inverted lotus capital. Each petal of the lotus is sculpted keeping in mind its density. The lower portion has curved planes neatly carved. Being a pillar image, it was conceived to be viewed from all the side, thus there are no boundations of fixed view points. A lion capital has also been found at Sanchi but is in a dilapidated condition. The motif of lion-capital-pillar continued even in the subsequent period.

DIDARGUNJ YAKSHINI



The life-size standing image of a Yakshini holding a *chauri* (flywhisk) from Didargunj near modern Patna is another good example of the sculptural tradition of the Mauryan Period. Kept in Patna Museum, it is a tall, well-proportioned, free-standing sculpture in round made in sandstone with a polished surface. The *chauri* is held in the right hand whereas the left hand is broken. The image shows sophistication in the treatment of form and medium. The sculptor's sensitivity towards the round muscular body is clearly visible. The face has round, fleshy cheeks, while the neck is relatively small in proportion; the eyes, nose and lips are sharp. Folds of muscles are properly rendered. The necklace beads are in full round, hanging to the belly. The tightening of garment around the belly creates the effect of a bulging belly. The lower garment has been rendered with great care. Every fold of the garment on the legs is shown by protruding lines clinging to the legs, which also create a somewhat transparent effect. The middle band of the garment falls till the feet. Thick bell-ornaments adorn the feet. The image stands firmly on its legs. Heaviness in the torso is depicted by heavy breasts. The back is equally impressive. The hair is tied in a knot at the back. The back is bare. Drapery at the back covers both legs. The flywhisk in the right hand is shown with incised lines continued on the back of the image.

Stupa *worship, Bharhut*

The method of working was collective in nature and at times only a specific portion of the monument is said to have been patronised by a particular patron. Traders recorded their donation along with their place of origin.

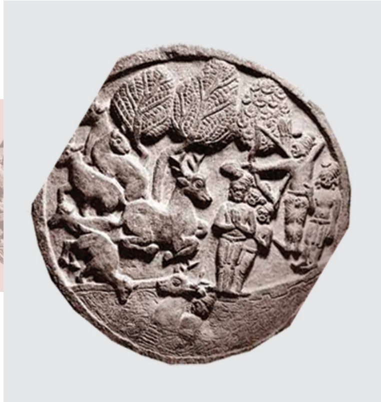
In the subsequent century, *stupas* were elaborately built with certain additions like the enclosing of the circumambulatory path with railings and sculptural decoration. There were numerous *stupas* constructed earlier but expansions or new additions were made in the second century BCE. The *stupa* consists of a cylindrical drum and a circular *anda* with a *harmika* and *chhatra* on the top which remain consistent throughout with minor variations and changes in shape and size. Apart from the circumambulatory path, gateways were added. Thus, with the elaborations in *stupa* architecture, there was ample space for the architects and sculptors to plan elaborations and to carve out images.

During the early phase of Buddhism, Buddha is depicted symbolically through footprints, *stupas*, lotus throne, *chakra*, etc. This indicates either simple worship, or paying respect, or at times depicts historisisation of life events. Gradually narrative became a part of the Buddhist tradition. Thus events from the life of the Buddha, the *Jataka* stories, were depicted on the railings and *torans* of the *stupas*. Mainly synoptic narrative, continuous narrative and episodic narrative are used in the pictorial tradition. While events from the life of the Buddha became an important theme in all the Buddhist monuments, the *Jataka* stories also became equally important for sculptural decorations. The main events associated with the Buddha's life which were frequently depicted were events related to the birth, renunciation, enlightenment, *dhammachakra-pravartana*, and *mahaparinibbana* (liberation from the cycle of birth.) Among the *Jataka* stories that are frequently depicted are Chhadanta *Jataka*, Vidurpundita *Jataka*, Ruru *Jataka*, Sibi *Jataka*, Vessantara *Jataka* and Shama *Jataka*.

EXERCISE

1. Do you think that the art of making sculptures in India began during the Mauryan period?
2. What was the significance of the *stupa* and how did *stupa* architecture develop?
3. Which were the four events in the life of the Buddha which have been depicted in different forms of Buddhist art? What did these events symbolise?
4. What are the *Jatakas*? How do the *Jatakas* relate to Buddhism? Find out.

© NCERT not to be republished



11144CH04

4

POST-MAURYAN TRENDS IN INDIAN ART AND ARCHITECTURE

FROM the second century BCE onwards, various rulers established their control over the vast Mauryan Empire: the Shungas, Kanvas, Kushanas and Guptas in the north and parts of central India; the Satvahanas, Ikshavakus, Abhiras, Vakataks in southern and western India. Incidentally, the period of the second century BCE also marked the rise of the main Brahmanical sects such as the Vaishnavas and the Shaivas. There are numerous sites dating back to the second century BCE in India. Some of the prominent examples of the finest sculpture are found at Vidisha, Bharhut (Madhya Pradesh), Bodhgaya (Bihar), Jaggayyapeta (Andhra Pradesh), Mathura (Uttar Pradesh), Khandagiri-Udaigiri (Odisha), Bhaja near Pune and Pavani near Nagpur (Maharashtra).

Yakshini, *Bharhut*

Bharhut

Bharhut sculptures are tall like the images of *Yaksha* and *Yakhshini* in the Mauryan period, modelling of the sculptural volume is in low relief maintaining linearity. Images stick to the picture plane. In the relief panels depicting narratives, illusion of three-dimensionality is shown with tilted perspective. Clarity in the narrative is enhanced by selecting main events. At Bharhut, narrative panels are shown with fewer characters but as the time progresses, apart from the main character in the story, others also start appearing in the picture space. At times more than one event at one geographical place is clubbed in the picture space or only a single main event is depicted in the pictorial space.

Availability of the space is utilised to the maximum by the sculptors. Folded hands in the narratives as well as single figures of the *Yakhshas* and *Yakshinis* are shown flat clinging to the chest. But in some cases, especially in later times, the hands are shown with the natural projection against the chest. Such examples show how artisans who were working at a collective level had to

© NCERT not to be republished

Reprint 2026-27

understand the method of carving. Initially, dressing the surface of stone slabs appears as the main concern. Later the human body and other forms were sculpted. Due to shallow carving of the picture surface, projection of hands and feet was not possible, hence, the folded hands and awkward position of the feet. There is a general stiffness in the body and arms. But gradually, such visual appearance was modified by making images with deep carvings, pronounced volume and a very naturalistic representation of human and animal bodies. Sculptures at Bharhut, Bodhgaya, Sanchi Stupa-2, and Jagayyapetta are good examples.

Narrative reliefs at Bharhut show how artisans used the pictorial language very effectively to communicate stories. In one such narrative, showing Queen Mayadevi's (mother of Siddhartha Gautam) dream, a descending elephant is shown. The queen is shown reclining on the bed whereas an elephant is shown on the top heading towards the womb of Queen Mayadevi. On the other hand, the depiction of a *Jataka* story is very simple—narrated by clubbing the events according to the geographical location of the story like the depiction of Ruru *Jataka* where the Boddhisattva deer is rescuing a man on his back. The other event in the same picture frame depicts the King standing with his army and about to shoot an arrow at the deer, and the man who was

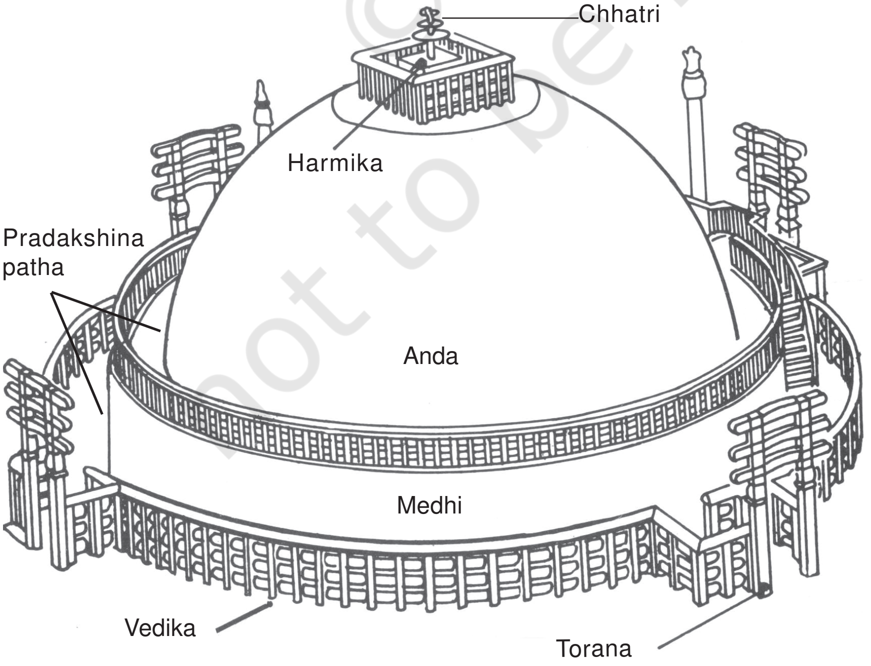
Jataka *panel* , *Bharhut*

Queen Maya's dream, Bharhut

rescued by the deer is also shown along with the king pointing a finger at the deer. According to the story, the man promised the deer after his rescue that he would not disclose his identity to anybody. But when the king makes a proclamation of reward for disclosing the identity of the deer, he turns hostile and takes the king to the same jungle where he had seen the deer. Such *Jataka* stories became part of *stupa* decoration. Interestingly, with the rise in the construction of *stupas* in various parts of the country, regional stylistic variations also began to emerge. One main characteristic in all the male images of first–second centuries BCE is the knotted headgear. In many sculptures it is very consistent. Some of the sculptures found at Bharhut are displayed in Indian Museum, Kolkata.

Sanchi

The next phase of sculptural development at Sanchi Stupa-1, Mathura, and Vengi in Andhra Pradesh (Guntur District) is noteworthy in the stylistic progression. Stupa-1 at Sanchi has upper as well as lower *pradakshinapatha* or circumambulatory path. It has four beautifully decorated *toranas* depicting various events from the life of the Buddha and the *Jatakas*. Figure compositions are in high relief, filling up the entire space. Depiction of posture gets naturalistic and there is no stiffness in the body. Heads have considerable projection in the picture space. Rigidity



Plan of Stupa-1, Sanchi

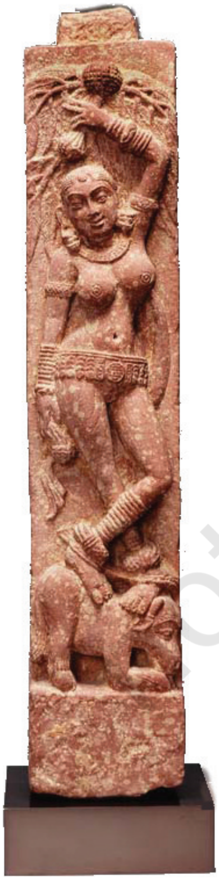
© NCERT not to be republished

Stone carving, Stupa-1, Sanchi

in the contours gets reduced and images are given movement. Narration gets elaborated. Carving techniques appear more advanced than Bharhut. Symbols continue to be used representing the Buddha. At Sanchi Stupa-1, narratives get more elaborated; however, the depiction of the dream episode remains very simple showing the reclining image of the queen and the elephant at the top. The historical narratives such as the siege of Kushinara, Buddha's visit to Kapilavastu, visit of Ashoka to the Ramgrama Stupa are carved with considerable details. In Mathura, images of this period bear the same quality but are different in the depiction of physiognomic details.

Mathura, Sarnath and Gandhara Schools

The first century CE onwards, Gandhara (now in Pakistan), Mathura in northern India and Vengi in Andhra Pradesh emerged as important centres of art production. Buddha in the symbolic form got a human form in Mathura and Gandhara. The sculptural tradition in Gandhara had the confluence of Bactria, Parthia and the local Gandhara tradition. The local sculptural tradition at Mathura became so strong that the tradition spread to other parts of northern India. The best example in this regard is the *stupa* sculptures found at Sanghol in the Punjab. The Buddha image at Mathura is modelled on the lines of earlier *Yaksha* images whereas in Gandhara it has Hellenistic features. Early Jain Teerthankar images and portraits of kings, specially the headless Kanishka are also found from Mathura.



Part of railing, Sangol

Images of Vaishnava (mainly Vishnu and his various forms) and Shaiva (mainly the *lingas* and *mukhalingas*) faiths are also found at Mathura but Buddhist images are found in large numbers. It may be noted that the images of Vishnu and Shiva are represented by their *ayudhas* (weapons). There is boldness in carving the large images, the volume of the images is projected out of the picture plane, the faces are round and smiling, heaviness in the sculptural volume is reduced to relaxed flesh. The garments of the body are clearly visible and they cover the left shoulder. Images of the Buddha, *Yakshas*, *Yakshinis*, Shaivite and Vaishnavite deities and portrait statues are profusely sculpted. In the second century CE, images in Mathura get sensual, rotundity increases, they become fleshier. The trend continues in the fourth century CE but in the late fourth century CE, the massiveness and fleshiness is reduced further and the flesh becomes more tightened, the volume of the drapery also gets reduced and in the fifth and sixth centuries CE, the drapery is

© NCERT not to be republished

integrated into the sculptural mass. Transparent quality in the robes of the Buddha images is evident. In this period, two important schools of sculptures in northern India are worth noting. The traditional centre, Mathura, remained the main art production site whereas Sarnath and Kosambi also emerged as important centres of art production. Many Buddha images in Sarnath have plain transparent drapery covering both shoulders, and the halo around the head has very little ornamentation whereas the Mathura Buddha images continue to depict folds of the drapery in the Buddha images and the halo around the head is profusely decorated. One can visit museums at Mathura, Sarnath, Varanasi, New Delhi, Chennai, Amaravati, etc. to study the features of early sculptures.

Among the important *stupa* sites outside the Gangetic valley is Devnimori in Gujarat. In the subsequent centuries sculptures had little variations while slender images with transparent drapery remained a dominant aesthetic sensibility.

Meditating Buddha, Gandhar, third–fourth century CE

Bodhisattva, Gandhar, fifth–sixth century CE

© NCERT not to be republished

Buddhist Monuments of South India

Vengi in Andhra Pradesh has many *stupa* sites like Jagayyapetta, Amaravati, Bhattiprolu, Nagarjunkonda, Goli, etc. Amaravati has a *mahachaitya* and had many sculptures which are now preserved in Chennai Museum, Amaravati Site Museum, National Museum, New Delhi and the British Museum, London. Like the Sanchi Stupa, the Amaravati Stupa also has *pradakshinapatha* enclosed within a *vedika* on which many narrative sculptures are depicted. The domical *stupa* structure is covered with relief *stupa* sculptural slabs which is a unique feature. The *torana* of the Amaravati Stupa has disappeared over a period of time. Events from the life of the Buddha and the *Jataka* stories are depicted. Though in the Amaravati Stupa there is evidence of construction activity in the third century BCE, it was best developed in the first and second centuries CE. Like Sanchi, the early phase is devoid of Buddha images but during the later phase, in the second and third centuries CE, the Buddha images are carved on the drum slabs and at many other places. Interior space in the composition is created by different postures of the figures such as semi-back, back, profile, frontal, semi-frontal, side, etc.

Sculptural form in this area is characterised by intense emotions. Figures are slender, have a lot of movement, bodies are shown with three bents (i.e. *tribhanga*), and the sculptural composition is more complex than at Sanchi. Linearity becomes flexible, dynamic movement breaks the

Carving on outer wall of Stupa, Amaravati

Stupa drum slab, Amravati, second century CE

© NCERT not to be republished

staticness of form. The idea of creating three-dimensional space in the relief sculpture is devised by using pronounced volume, angular bodies and complex overlapping. However, absolute attention has been paid to the clarity of form despite its size and role in the narrative. Narratives are profusely depicted which include events from the life of the Buddha and the *Jataka* stories. There are a number of *Jataka* scenes that have not been completely identified. In the depiction of the birth event, the queen is shown reclining on a bed surrounded by female attendants and a small-sized elephant is carved on the upper frame of the composition showing the dream of Queen Mayadevi. In another relief, four events related to the birth of the Buddha are shown. These represent varied ways of depicting the narratives.

The animated movement in the figures gets reduced in the sculptures of Nagarjunkonda and Goli in the third century CE. Even within the relatively low relief volume than in the Amaravati sculptures, artists at Nagarjunkonda and Goli managed to create the effect of protruding surfaces of the body which is suggestive in nature and look very integral. Independent Buddha images are also found at Amaravati, Nagarjunkonda and Guntapalle in Andhra Pradesh. Guntapalle is a rock-cut cave site near Eluru. Small apsidal and circular *chaitya* halls have been excavated belonging to the second century BCE. The other important site where rock-cut *stupas* have been excavated is Anakapalle near Vishakhapatanam. In Karnataka, Sannati in Gulbarga district is the largest *stupa* site excavated so far. It also has a *stupa* like the one in Amaravati decorated with sculptural relief.

Panel, Nagarjunkonda

© NCERT not to be republished

Construction of a large number of stupas does not mean that there were no structured temples or *viharas* or *chaityas*. We do get evidences but no structured *chaitya* or *vihara* survived. Among the important structured *viharas*, mention may be made of the Sanchi apsidal *chaitya* structure, i.e., temple 18, which is a simple shrine temple having front pillars and a hall at the back. Similar structured temples at Guntapalle are also worth mentioning. Along with the images of the Buddha, other Buddhist images of Boddhisattvas like Avalokiteshvara, Padmapani, Vajrapani, Amitabha, and Maitreya Buddha started getting sculpted. However, with the rise of *Vajrayana* Buddhism many Boddhisattva images were added as a part of the personified representations of certain virtues or qualities as propagated by the Buddhist religious principles for the welfare of the masses.

Cave Tradition in Western India

In western India, many Buddhist caves dating back to the second century BCE onwards have been excavated. Mainly three architectural types were executed—(i) apsidal vault-roof *chaitya* halls (found at Ajanta, Pitalkhora, Bhaja); (ii) apsidal vault-roof pillarless hall (found at Thana-Nadsur in Maharashtra); and (iii) flat-roofed quadrangular hall with a circular chamber at the back (found at Kondivite in Maharashtra). The front of the *chaitya* hall is dominated by the motif of a semi-circular *chaitya* arch with an open front which has a wooden facade and, in some cases, there is no dominating *chaitya* arch window such as found at Kondivite. In all the *chaitya* caves a stupa at the back is common.

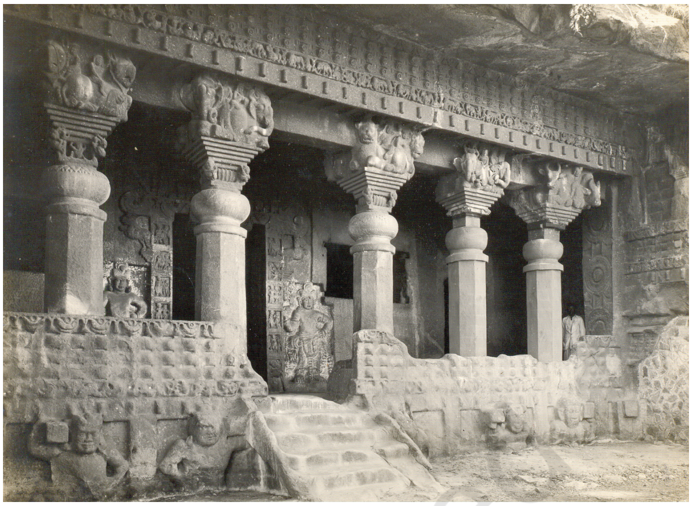
In the first century BCE some modifications were made to the standard plan of the apsidal vault-roof variety where the hall becomes rectangular like at Ajanta Cave No. 9

Unfinished chaitya cave, Kanheri

Chaitya hall, Karla

© NCERT not to be republished

with a stone-screen wall as a facade. It is also found at Bedsa, Nashik, Karla and Kanheri. Many cave sites have the standard first type of *chaitya* halls in the subsequent period. In Karla, the biggest rock-cut *chaitya* hall was excavated. The cave consists of an open courtyard with two pillars, a stone screen wall to protect from rain, a veranda, a stone-screen wall as facade, an apsidal vault-roof *chaitya* hall with pillars, and a *stupa* at the back. Karla *chaitya* hall is decorated with human and animal figures. They are heavy in their execution, and move in the picture space. Further elaboration over the Karla *chaitya* hall plan is observed at Kanheri Cave No.3. Though the cave's interior was not fully finished, it shows how the carving progressed from time to time. Subsequently, the quadrangular flat-roofed variety became the most preferred design and is extensively found at many places.



Nashik Cave No. 3

The *viharas* are excavated in all the cave sites. The plan of the *viharas* consists of a veranda, a hall and cells around the walls of the hall. Some of the important *vihara* caves are Ajanta Cave No. 12, Bedsa Cave No. 11, Nashik Cave Nos. 3, 10 and 17. Many of the early *vihara* caves are carved with interior decorative motifs like *chaitya* arches and the *vedica* designs over the cell doors of the cave. Facade design in Nashik Cave Nos. 3, 10, and 17 became a distinct achievement. The *vihara* caves at Nashik were excavated with front pillars carved with *ghata*-base and *ghata*-capital with human figures. One such *vihara* cave was also excavated at Junnar in Maharashtra, which is popularly known as Ganeshleni because an image of Ganesha belonging to a later period was installed in it. Later, a stupa was added at the back of the hall of the *vihara* and it became a *chaitya-vihara*. The stupas in the fourth and fifth centuries CE have Buddha images attached. Junnar has the largest cave excavations— more than two hundred caves around the hills of the town— whereas Kanheri in Mumbai has a hundred and eight excavated caves. The

Chaitya, Cave No. 12, Bhaja

© NCERT not to be republished

most important sites are Ajanta, Pitalkhora, Ellora, Nashik, Bhaja, Junnar, Karla, Kanheri. Ajanta, Ellora, and Kanheri continue to flourish.

Ajanta

The most famous cave site is Ajanta. It is located in Aurangabad District of Maharashtra State. Ajanta has twenty-nine caves. It has four *chaitya* caves datable to the earlier phase, i.e., the second and the first century BCE (Cave Nos. 10 and 9) and the later phase, i.e., the fifth century CE (Cave Nos. 19 and 26). It has large *chaitya-viharas* and is decorated with sculptures and paintings. Ajanta is the only surviving example of painting of the first century BCE and the fifth century CE. The caves at Ajanta as well as in western Deccan in general have no precise chronology because of the lack of known dated inscriptions.

Cave Nos. 10, 9, 12 and 13 belong to the early phase, Cave Nos. 11, 15 and 6 upper and lower, and Cave No. 7 belong to the phase earlier than late fifth century CE. The rest of the caves belong to late fifth century CE to early sixth century CE. The *chaitya* Cave Nos. 19 and 26 are elaborately carved. Their facade is decorated with Buddha and, Boddhisattva images. They are of the apsidal-vault-roof variety. Cave No. 26 is very big and the entire interior hall is carved with a variety of Buddha images, the biggest one being the *Mahaparinibbana* image. The rest of the caves are *vihara-chaitya* caves. They consist of a pillared veranda, a pillared hall and cells along the walls. The back wall has the main Buddha shrine. Shrine images at Ajanta are grand in size. Some of the *vihara* caves are unfinished such as Cave Nos. 5, 14, 23 24, 28 and 29. Among the important patrons at Ajanta were Varahadeva (patron of Cave No. 16), the prime minister of the Vakataka king, Harishena; Upendragupta (patron of Cave Nos. 17–20) the local king of the region and feudatory of the Vakataka king, Harishena; Buddhabhadra (patron of Cave No. 26); and Mathuradasa (patron of Cave No. 4). Many paintings have survived in Cave Nos. 1, 2, 16 and 17.

View, Ajanta Caves

not to be CERT published

Sculptural panel in the veranda of Cave No. 2, Ajanta

Paintings have a lot of typological variations. Outward projections are used in the Ajanta paintings of the fifth century CE. Lines are clearly defined and are very rhythmic. Body colour gets merged with the outer line creating the effect of volume. The figures are heavy like the sculptures of western India.

Painting of the Buddha, Yashodhra and Rahul, Cave No. 17, Ajanta

The caves of the early phase also have paintings especially Cave Nos. 9 and 10. They belong to the first century BCE. The figures are broad with heavy proportion and arranged in the picture space in a linear way in Cave No. 9. Lines are sharp. Colours are limited. Figures in these caves are painted with considerable naturalism and there is no over-stylisation. Events are grouped together according to geographical location. Tiered, horizontally-arranged figures appear as a convenient choice of the artisans. Separation of geographic location has been indicated by using outward architectural bands. Figures appear like the Sanchi sculptures which indicate how the lithic and painting traditions were progressing simultaneously. The frontal knot of the headgear of the figures follows the same pattern as that of the sculptures. However, there are a few different patterns of headgear.

© NCERT not to be republished

Apsara, Cave No. 17, Ajanta

The second phase of paintings can be studied from the images of the Buddhas painted on the walls and pillars of Cave Nos. 10 and 9. These Buddha figures are different from the figures painted in the fifth century CE. Such developments in paintings need to be understood in the context of the religious requirement. Cave excavation and painting were simultaneous processes and dating of the paintings follows the date of the cave excavations. The next stage of development is observed mainly in the paintings of Cave Nos. 16, 17, 1, and 2. However, it does not mean that pictures had not been painted in other caves. Infact almost in all the finished excavations, pictures have been painted but very few have survived. Paintings have typological variations in these caves. It may also be observed that various skin colours

Painted ceiling, Cave No. 10, Ajanta

© NCERT not to be republished

Paintings, Cave No. 9, Ajanta

are used in the paintings such as brown, yellowish brown, greenish, yellow ochre, etc., which represent a multicoloured population. Paintings of Cave Nos. 16 and 17 have precise and elegant painterly quality. They do not bear the ponderous volume of the sculptures in the caves. Movements in the figures are very rhythmic. Brown thick dark lines are used as contours. Lines are forceful and full of energy. Attempts are also made to give highlights in the figural compositions.

The paintings of Cave Nos. 1 and 2 are very orderly and naturalistic, well integrated with the sculptures in the caves. Architectural setting is simple and the arrangement of figures is delineated in the circular form to create three-dimensionality and the special effects. Half-closed, elongated eyes are employed. Different guilds of artisans seem to have worked on the paintings of these caves which can be inferred from their typological and stylistic variations. Naturalistic postures and unexaggerated facial features are used as exceptional types.

The themes of the paintings are the events from the life of the Buddha, the *Jatakas* and the *Avadanas.* Some paintings such as *Simhala Avadana*, *Mahajanaka Jataka* and *Vidhurpundita Jataka* cover the entire wall of the cave. It is worth noting that *Chaddanta Jataka* has been painted in the early Cave No. 10 with many details and events grouped according to their geographical locations. Events that happened in the jungle and events that happened in the palace are separated by their locations. In Cave No. 10

© NCERT not to be republished

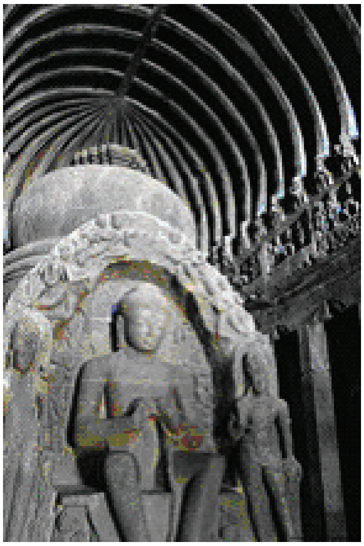
Part of Mahajanaka Jataka panel, Cave No. 1, Ajanta

Chaddanta faithfully follows the Pali text whereas the one painted in Cave No. 17 is very different. In one of the events, the Boddhisattva, *Chaddanta*, is shown removing his own tusk and giving it to the hunter, Sonuttar. The other important paintings are the famous Padmapani and Vajrapani in Cave No. 1. However, it may be observed that the images of Padmapani and Vajrapani are very common in Ajanta but the best preserved paintings are in Cave No. 1. Some figures in Cave No. 2 have affiliation with the Vengi sculptures and at the same time, the influence of the Vidarbha sculptural tradition is also observed in the delineation of some sculptures. The subsequent development of the painting tradition has been discussed in the next chapter.

Ellora

Another important cave site located in Aurangabad District is Ellora. It is located a hundred kilometres from Ajanta and has thirty-four Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jain caves. It is a unique art-historical site in the country as it has monastries associated with the three religions dating from the fifth century CE onwards to the eleventh century CE. It is also unique in terms of stylistic eclecticism, i.e., confluence of many styles at one place. The caves of Ellora and Aurangabad show the ongoing differences between the two religions—Buddhism and Brahmanical. There are twelve Buddhist caves having many images belonging to Vajrayana Buddhism like Tara, Mahamayuri, Akshobhya, Avalokiteshwara, Maitrya, Amitabha, etc. Buddhist caves

Courtyard, Kailash Temple, Cave No.16, Ellora



Seated Buddha, Chaitya Hall, Cave No. 10, Ellora

© NCERT not to be republished

are big in size and are of single, double and triple storeys. Their pillars are massive. Ajanta also has excavated double-storeyed caves but at Ellora, the triple storey is a unique achievement. All the caves were plastered and painted but nothing visible is left. The shrine Buddha images are big in size; they are generally guarded by the images of Padmapani and Vajrapani. Cave No. 12, which is a triple-storey excavation, has images of Tara, Avalokiteshwara, Manushi Buddhas and the images of Vairochana, Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, Amoghsiddhi, Vajrasatva and Vajraraja. On the other hand, the only double-storey cave of the Brahmanical faith is Cave No. 14. Pillar designs grow from the Buddhist caves and when they reach the Jain caves belonging to the ninth century CE, they become very ornate and the decorative forms gain heavy protrusion.

The Brahmanical Cave Nos. 13–28 have many sculptures. Many caves are dedicated to Shaivism, but the images of both Shiva and Vishnu and their various forms according to Puranic narrative are depicted. Among the Shaivite themes, Ravana shaking Mount Kailash, Andhakasurvadha, Kalyanasundara are profusely depicted whereas among the Vaishnavite themes, the different *avatars* of Vishnu are depicted. The sculptures at Ellora

Gajasur Shiva, Cave No.15, Ellora

are monumental, and have protruding volume that create deep recession in the picture space. The images are heavy and show considerable sophistication in the handling of sculptural volume. Various guilds at Ellora came from different places like Vidarbha, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and carved the sculptures. Thereby it is the most diverse site in India in terms of the sculptural styles. Cave No. 16 is known as Kailash leni. A rock-cut temple has been carved out of a single rock, a unique achievement of the artisans, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Among the important Shaivite caves are Cave No. 29 and Cave No. 21. The plan of Cave No. 29 is almost like that of the main cave at Elephanta. The sculptural quality of Cave Nos. 29, 21, 17, 14 and 16 is amazing for its monumentality and vigorous movements in the picture space.

The Bagh Caves, consisting of Buddhist mural paintings, are located 97 km from Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh. These rock-cut cave monuments are not natural but carved over a period of time during the ancient India mostly during the Satvahana period. The Bagh caves, like those at Ajanta, were excavated by master craftsmen on perpendicular sandstone rock face of a hill across the seasonal stream of Baghani. Out of the original nine caves, only five have survived, all of which are *viharas* or resting places for monks, having a quadrangular plan. A small chamber, usually at the back, forms the *Chatiya* — the prayer hall. Most significant of the five caves is Cave No. 4, commonly known as the *Rang Mahal*, meaning the Palace of Colours, where paintings on the wall and ceilings are still visible. Other caves where remanants of tempra mural paintings on the walls and ceiling can be seen are Cave Nos. 2, 3, 5 and 7. The ground prepared was a reddish-brown gritty and thick mud plaster, laid out on the walls and ceilings. Over the plaster, lime-priming was done, on which these paintings were made. Some of the most beautiful paintings were on the walls of the portico of Cave 4. To prevent further loss of the values of the Indian art, most paintings were carefully removed in 1982 and today can be seen in the Archaeological Museum of Gwalior.

Elephanta Caves and Other Sites

The Elephanta Caves located near Mumbai are dominated by the Shaivite faith. It is contemporary with Ellora, and its sculptures show slenderness in the body, with stark light and dark effects.

© NCERT not to be republished

Entrance to Elephanta Caves

The tradition of rock-cut caves continued in the Deccan and they are found not only in Maharashtra but also in Karnataka, mainly at Badami and Aiholi, executed under the patronage of the Chalukyas; in Andhra Pradesh in the area of Vijayawada; and in Tamil Nadu, mainly at Mahabalipuram, under the patronage of the Pallavas. The post-sixth-century development of art history in the country depended more on political patronage than the collective public patronage of the early historic periods.

Mention may also be made of the terracotta figurines that are found at many places all over the country. They show a parallel tradition with the religious lithic sculptures as well as the independent local tradition. Many terracotta figures of various sizes are found which show their popularity. They are toys, religious figurines as well as figurines made for healing purposes as part of the belief systems.

Cave Tradition in Eastern India

Like in western India, Buddhist caves have also been excavated in eastern India, mainly in the coastal region of Andhra Pradesh, and in Odisha. One of the main sites in Andhra Pradesh is Guntapalle in Eluru district. The caves have been excavated in the hills along with the structured monasteries. Perhaps it is among the very unique sites where the structured *stupas*, *viharas* and the caves are

© NCERT not to be republished

Reprint 2026-27

Udaigiri-Khandagiri caves near Bhubaneswar

Details of the veranda, Udaigiri-Khandagiri

excavated at one place. The Guntapalle *chaitya* cave is circular with a *stupa* in the circular hall and a *chaitya* arch carved at the entrance. The cave is relatively small when compared to the caves in western India. A number of *vihara* caves have been excavated. The main *vihara* caves, despite the small dimensions, have been decorated with *chaitya* arches on the exterior. They are rectangular with vaulted roof and are carved single-storeyed or double-storeyed without a large central hall. These excavations date back to the second century BCE. There are some excavations which were added in the subsequent centuries but all are of the *vihara* type. Apart from Guntapalle, the other important cave site is Rampaerrampallam which has very moderate small excavations but there are rock-cut stupas on the hillock. At Anakapalli near Vishakhapatnam, caves were excavated and a huge rock-cut stupa was carved out of the hillock during the fourth–fifth centuries CE. It is a unique site as it has the biggest rock-cut stupas in the country. Many votive rock-cut stupas all around the hillock have also been excavated.

The rock-cut cave tradition also existed in Odisha. The earliest examples are the Udaigiri-Khandagiri caves in the vicinity of Bhubaneswar. These caves are scattered and have inscriptions of Kharavela Jain kings. According to the inscriptions, the caves were meant for Jain monks. There are numerous single-cell excavations. Some have been carved in huge independent boulders and given the shape of animals. The big caves include a cave with a pillared veranda with cells at the back. The upper part of the cells is decorated with a series of *chaitya* arches and

© NCERT not to be republished

narratives that still continue in the folklores of the region. The figures in this cave are voluminous, move freely in the picture space, and are an excellent example of qualitative carving. Some caves in this complex were excavated later, some time in the eighth–ninth centuries CE.

EXERCISE

1. Describe the physical and aesthetic features of Sanchi Stupa-I.
2. Analyse the stylistic trends of the sculptures in North India during the fifth and sixth centuries.
3. How did cave architecture develop in different parts of India, from cave shelters to the monolitic temple at Ellora?
4. Why are the mural paintings of Ajanta renowned?

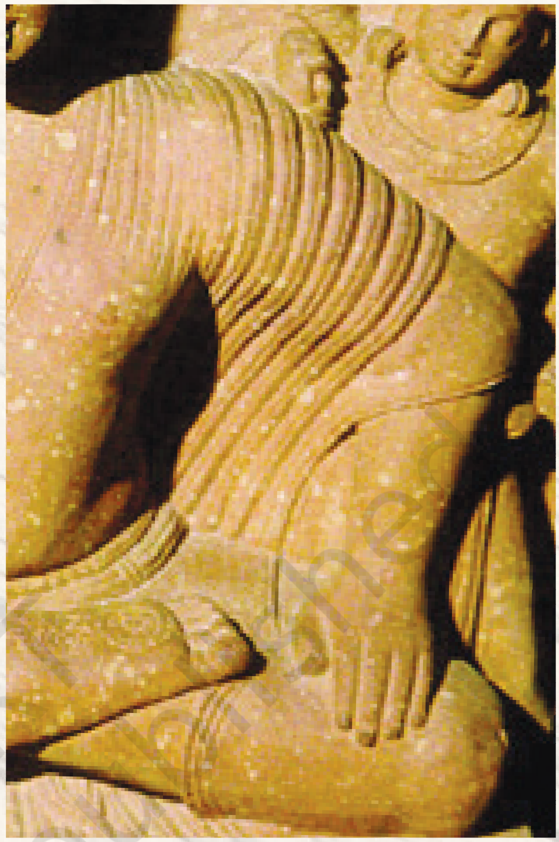
© NCERT not to be republished

STUPA-1, SANCHI

Sanchi, about 50 km from Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh, is a world heritage site. Along with other relatively small *stupas*, there are three main *stupas* at Sanchi. Stupa-1 is presumed to have the relics of the Buddha, Stupa-2, the relics of ten less famous *arhats* belonging to three different generations. Their names are found on the relic casket. Stupa-3 has the relics of Sariputta and Mahamougalayana.

Stupa-1, known for the carvings on its gateways is one of the finest examples of *stupa* architecture. Originally the *stupa* was a small brick structure which expanded over a period and was covered with stone, *vedika* and the *torana* (gateways). The Ashokan lion-capital pillar with an inscription is found on the southern side of the *stupa*, indicating how Sanchi became a centre of monastic and artistic activities. The south gateway was made first followed by the others. The *pradakshinapath* around the *stupa* is covered with the *vedika*. There is also the upper *pradakshinapath* which is unique to this site. The four gateways are decorated profusely with sculptures. Buddha is shown symbolically as an empty throne, feet, *chhatra*, *stupas*, etc. *Toranas* are constructed in all four directions. Their stylistic differences indicate their possible chronology from the first century BCE onwards. Though Stupa-1 is the oldest *stupa*, the carving of images on the *vedica* of Stupa-2 are earlier than those on Stupa-1. *Jatakas* also become an important part of the narratives in *stupas*. The figures at Sanchi, despite being small in dimension, show considerable mastery of sculpting. Their physiognomic treatment of the body shows both depth and dimension which are very naturalistic. There are guardian images on pillars and the *shalbhanjika* (i.e., lady holding the branch of a tree) sculptures are remarkable in their treatment of volume. The rigidity of the earlier sculptures of Stupa-2 is no more there. Each *torana* consists of two vertical pillars and three horizontal bars on the top. Each horizontal bar is decorated with different sculptural themes on the front as well as at the back. Supporting the extensions of the lowermost horizontal bar from below are the images of *shalbhanjikas*.

SEATED BUDDHA, KATRA MOUND, MATHURA

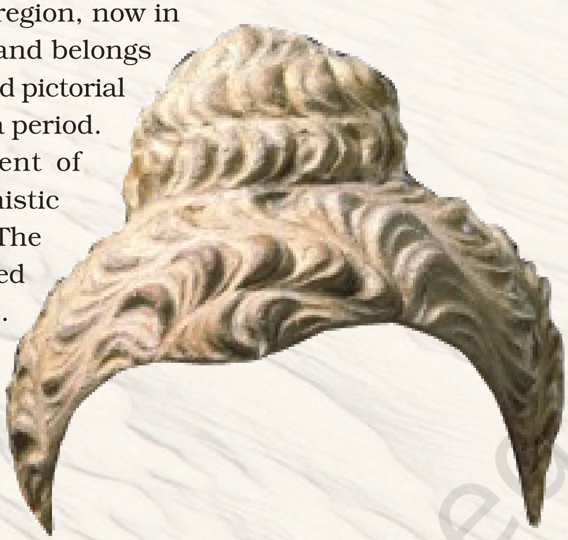


Mathura was a great centre for making sculptures during the early historic period and many images have been found here. A large number of images dating back to the Kushana Period is from Mathura. A distinct way of sculpting practised at Mathura makes the images found here different from those at other centres in the country. The image of the Buddha from the Katra mound belongs to the second century CE. It represents the Buddha with two Boddhisattva attendants. The Buddha is seated in *padmasana* (cross-folded legs) and the right hand is in the *abhayamudra,* raised a little above the shoulder level whereas the left hand is placed on the left thigh. The *ushanisha,* i.e., hair knot, is shown with a vertically raised projection. Mathura sculptures from this period are made with light volume having fleshy body. The shoulders are broad. The *sanghati* (garment) covers only one shoulder and has been made prominently visible covering the left hand whereas while covering the torso, the independent volume of the garment is reduced to the body torso. The Buddha is seated on a lion throne. The attendant figures are identified as the images of the Padmapani and Vajrapani Boddhisattvas as one holds a lotus and the other a *vajra* (thunderbolt). They wear crowns and are on either side of the Buddha. The halo around the head of the Buddha is very large and is decorated with simple geometric motifs. There are two flying figures placed diagonally above the halo. They bear a lot of movement in the picture space. Flexibility replaces the earlier rigidity in the images giving them a more earthy look. Curves of the body are as delicately carved. The upright posture of the Buddha image creates movement in space. The face is round with fleshy cheeks. The bulge of the belly is sculpted with controlled musculature. It may be noted that there are numerous examples of sculptures from the Kushana Period at Mathura, but this image is representative and is important for the understanding of the development of the Buddha image in the subsequent periods.

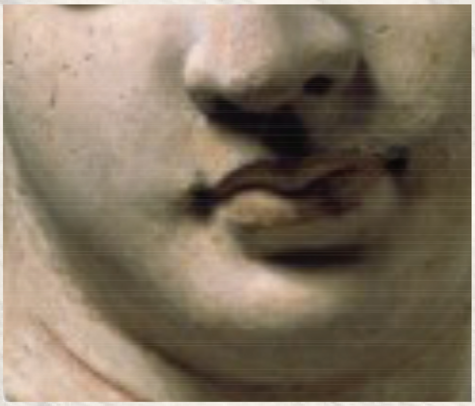
not to be republished © NCERT

Buddha Head, Taxila

© NCERT not to be republished



The Buddha head from Taxila in the Gandhara region, now in Pakistan, dates back to the second century CE and belongs to the Kushana period. The image shows hybridised pictorial conventions that developed during the Gandhara period. It has Greco-Roman elements in the treatment of sculpture. The Buddha head has typical Hellenistic elements that have grown over a period of time. The curly hair of the Buddha is thick having a covered layer of sharp and linear strokes over the head. The forehead plane is large having protruding eyeballs, the eyes are half-closed and the face and cheeks are not round like the images found in other parts of India. There is a certain amount of heaviness in the figures of the Gandhara region. The ears are elongated, especially the earlobes. The treatment of the form bears linearity and the outlines are sharp. The surface is smooth. The image is very expressive. The interplay of light and dark is given considerable attention by using the curving and protruding planes of the eye-socket and the planes of the nose. The expression of calmness is the central point of attraction. Modelling of the face enhances the naturalism of three-dimensionality. Assimilating various traits of Acamenian, Parthian and Bactrian traditions into the local tradition is the hallmark of the Gandhara style. The Gandhara images have physiognomic features of the Greco-Roman tradition but they display a very distinct way of treating physiognomic details that are not completely Greco-Roman. The source of development of Buddha images, as well as, others has its genesis in its peculiar conditions in western and eastern style. It may also be observed that the north-western part of India, which is now Pakistan, always had continuous habitation from proto-historic times. It continued in the historical period as well. A large number of images have been found in the Gandhara region. They consist of narratives of the life of the Buddha, narrations from the *Jataka* stories, and Buddha and Boddhisattva images.



not to be republished © NCERT

SEATED BUDDHA, SARNATH

This image of the Buddha from Sarnath belonging to the late fifth century CE is housed in the site museum at Sarnath. It has been made in Chunar sandstone. The Buddha is shown seated on a throne in the *padmasana*. It represents *dhammachackrapravartana* as can be seen from the figures on the throne. The panel below the throne depicts a *chakra* (wheel) in the centre and a deer on either side with his disciples. Thus, it is the representation of the historical event of *dhammachakrapravartana* or the preaching of the *dhamma*.

This Buddha image is a fine example of the Sarnath school of sculpture. The body is slender and well-proportioned but slightly elongated. The outlines are delicate, very rhythmic. Folded legs are expanded in order to create a visual balance in the picture space. Drapery clings to the body and is transparent to create the effect of integrated volume. The face is round, the eyes are half-closed, the lower lip is protruding, and the roundness of the cheeks has reduced as compared to the earlier images from the Kushana Period at Mathura. The hands are shown in *dhammachakrapravartana mudra* placed just below the chest. the neck is slightly elongated with two incised lines indicating folds. The *ushanisha* has circular curled hairs. The aim of the sculptors in ancient India had always been to represent the Buddha as a great human being who achieved *nibbana* (i.e., cessation of anger and hate). The back of the throne is profusely decorated with different motifs of flowers and creepers placed in a concentric circle. The central part of the halo is plain without any decoration. It makes the halo visually impressive. Decoration in halo and the back of the throne indicates the artisan's sensitivity. Sarnath Buddha images of this period show considerable softness in the treatment of the surface and volume. Transparent drapery becomes part of the physical body. Such refinement comes over a period of time and these features continued in subsequent periods.

There are many other Buddha images in the standing position from Sarnath having features like transparent drapery, subtle movement, carved separately and placed about the memorial *stupas* around the Dharmarajika Stupa. These images are now preserved in the Sarnath Museum. They are either single or with the attendant figures of Boddhisattvas, Padmapani and Vajrapani.

PADMAPANI BODDHISATTVA
AJANTA CAVE NO. 1

Ajanta Cave No. 2

This painting on the back wall of the interior hall before the shrine-antechamber in Cave No. 1 at Ajanta dates back to the late fifth century CE. The Boddhisattva is holding a *padma* (lotus), has large shoulders, and has three bents in the body creating a movement in the picture space. The modelling is soft. Outlines are merged with the body volume creating the effect of three-dimensionality. The figure of the Boddhisattva is wearing a big crown in which detailed rendering is visible. The head is slightly bent to the left. The eyes are half-closed and are slightly elongated. The nose is sharp and straight. Light colour all over the projected planes of the face is aimed at creating an effect of three-dimensionality. The beaded necklace too has similar features. Broad and expanded shoulders create heaviness in the body. The torso is relatively round. Lines are delicate, rhythmic, and define the contours of the body. The right hand is holding a lotus and the left hand is extended in the space. The Boddhisattva is surrounded by small figures. The foreshortened right hand of the Boddhisattva makes the image more solid, and effectively dense. The thread over the torso is shown with fine spiral lines indicating its dimensions. Each and every part of the body is given equal attention. Light red, brown, green and blue colours are used. Nose projections, incised end of lips with lower lip projection and small chin contribute to the overall effect of solidity in the figure composition. The paintings in Cave No.1 are of good quality and are better preserved. One can observe certain typological and stylistic variations in the paintings of Ajanta indicating different guilds of artisans working on the cave paintings at Ajanta over the centuries.

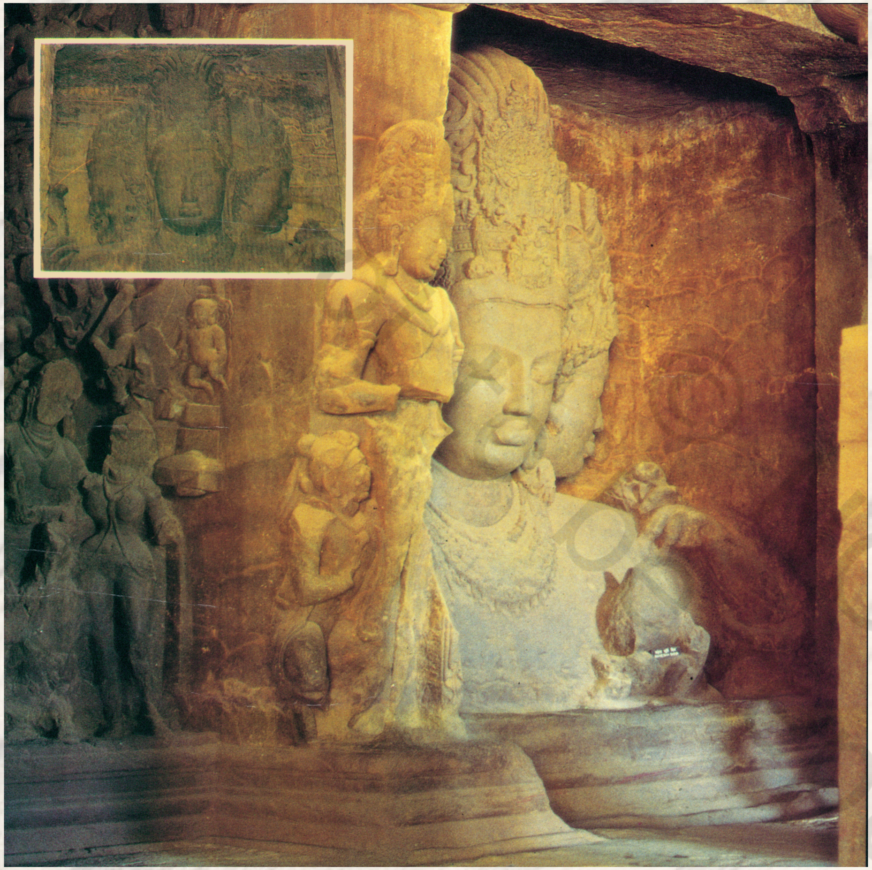
On the other side of the image Vajrapani Bodhisattva has been painted. He holds *a vajra* in his right hand and wears a crown. This image also bears the same pictorial qualities as the Padmapani. Cave No. 1 has many interesting paintings of Buddhist themes such as *Mahajanak Jataka*, *Umag Jataka*, etc. The *Mahajanak Jataka* is painted on the entire wall side and is the biggest narrative painting. It may be observed that the paintings of Padmapani and Vajrapani and the Bodhisattvas are painted as shrine guardians. Similar such iconographic arrangement is also observed in other caves of Ajanta. However Padmapani and Vajrapani in Cave No. 1 are among the best survived paintings of Ajanta.

Painting of Mahajanak Jataka, Ajanta Cave No. 1

MARA VIJAYA, AJANTA CAVE NO. 26

The theme of Mara Vijaya has been painted in the caves of Ajanta. This is the only sculptural representation sculpted on the right wall of Cave No. 26. It is sculpted near the colossal Buddha image of *Mahaparinibbana*. The panel shows the image of the Buddha in the centre surrounded by Mara's army along with his daughter. The event is part of the enlightenment. It is a personification of the commotion of mind which the Buddha went through at the time of enlightenment. Mara represents desire. According to the narrative, there is a dialogue between the Buddha and Mara, and the Buddha is shown with his right hand indicating towards earth as a witness to his generosity. This relief sculptural panel is highly animated and shows a very matured sculptural style at Ajanta. The composition is very complex with highly voluminous images. Their complex arrangement in the picture space is highly dynamic and generates considerable movement. The figure on the right shows Mara coming with his army consisting of various kinds of people including some with grotesque animal faces. The dancing figures at the lower base with the musicians have forward bulging waist, and one of the dancing figures has expanded her hands in the dancing posture with an angular frontal look. On the left lower end, the image of Mara is shown contemplating how to disturb Siddhartha, the name of the Buddha before enlightenment. The army of Mara is shown marching towards the Buddha in the first half of the panel whereas the lower half of the panel shows the departing army of Mara giving him adorations. The centrally placed Buddha is in *padmasana* and a tree at the back is shown by dense leaves. Some of the facial features of the Mara army has tacit characters of the sculptures from Vidarbha. The artisans at Ajanta worked in guilds and their stylistic affiliations can be traced by identifying such stylistic features. This is the largest sculptural panel at Ajanta. Though there are several big images in the caves of Ajanta and especially located in the shrine-antechamber as well as facade walls, such a complex arrangement of figures is unique. On the other hand, painted panels exhibit such complexities in their arrangement. A similar kind of arrangement of dancing figures in a panel is also observed at the Aurangabad caves.

MAHESHMURTI, ELEPHANTA



The image of Maheshmurti at Elephanta dates back to the early sixth century CE. It is located in the main cave shrine. In the tradition of western Deccan sculpting it is one of the best examples of qualitative achievement in sculpting images in rock-cut caves. The image is large in size. The central head is the main Shiva figure whereas the other two visible heads are of Bhairava and Uma. The central face is in high relief having a round face, thick lips and heavy eyelids. The lower lip is prominently protruded showing a very different characteristic. The all-inclusive aspect of Shiva is exhibited in this sculpture by soft-modelling, smooth surface and large face. The face of Shiva-Bhairava is clearly shown in profile in anger with bulging eye and mustache. The other face showing feminine characters is of Uma who is the consort of Shiva. One of the *shilpa* texts mentions five integrated faces of Shiva and this image, despite being shown with only three faces, is considered as of the same variety and the top and back faces are deemed as invisible. Each face has a different crown as per its iconographic prescription. This sculpture has been sculpted on the south wall of the cave along with the sculpture of Ardhanarishwara and the Gangadhara panel. Elephanta sculptures are known for their remarkable qualities of surface smoothness, elongation and rhythmic movement. Their composition is very complex. The iconographic arrangement of this cave is replicated in Cave No. 29 at Ellora.

Mural Traditions of India

A

B

C

D

E

A. *Anantha from Ananthapadmanabh Temple, Kasarghod*

B. *Shiva chasing the boar—a scene from* Kiratarjuniya, *Lepaksh temple*

C. *Chola king Rajaraja and court poet Karuvar Dever, Thanjavoor, eleventh century*

D. *Shiva killing Tripuraasura, Thanjavoor*

E. *Rama kills Ravana, a scene from Ramayana panel, Mattancheri Palace*

F. *Shasta, Padmanabhapuram Palace, Thakkala*

F

5 LATER MURAL TRADITIONS

EVEN after Ajanta, very few sites with paintings have survived which provide valuable evidences to reconstruct the tradition of paintings. It may also be noted that the sculptures too were plastered and painted. The tradition of cave excavations continued further at many places where sculpting and painting were done simultaneously.

Badami

One such site is Badami in the State of Karnataka. Badami was the capital of the early Chalukyan dynasty which ruled the region from 543 to 598 CE. With the decline of the Vakataka rule, the Chalukyas established their power in the Deccan. The Chalukya king, Mangalesha, patronised the excavation of the Badami caves. He was the younger son of the Chalukya king, Pulakesi I, and the brother of Kirtivarman I. The inscription in Cave No.4 mentions the date 578–579 CE, describes the beauty of the cave and includes the dedication of the image of Vishnu. Thus it may be presumed that the cave was excavated in the same era and the patron records his Vaishnava affiliation. Therefore, the cave is popularly known as the Vishnu Cave. Only a fragment of the painting has survived on the vaulted roof of the front *mandapa*.

Queen and attendants, Badami

Paintings in this cave depict palace scenes. One shows Kirtivarman, the son of Pulakesi I and the elder brother of Mangalesha, seated inside the palace with his wife and feudatories watching a dance scene. Towards the corner of the panel are figures of Indra and his retinue. Stylistically speaking, the painting represents an

© NCERT not to be republished

extension of the tradition of mural painting from Ajanta to Badami in South India. The sinuously drawn lines, fluid forms and compact composition exemplify the proficiency and maturity the artists had achieved in the sixth century CE. The gracefully drawn faces of the king and the queen remind us of the style of modelling in Ajanta. Their eye-sockets are large, eyes are half-closed, and lips are protruding. It is noteworthy to observe that the contours of different parts of the face create protruding structures of the face itself. Thus, with simple line treatment artists could create volume.

Murals under the Pallava, Pandava and Chola Kings

The tradition of painting extended further down south in Tamil Nadu in the preceding centuries with regional variations during the regimes of Pallava, Pandya and Chola dynasties. The Pallava kings who succeeded the Chalukya kings in parts of South India, were also patrons of arts. Mahendravarma I who ruled in the seventh century was responsible for building temples at Panamalai, Mandagapattu and Kanchipuram. The inscription at Mandagapattu mentions Mahendravarman I with numerous titles such as Vichitrachitta (curious-minded),

Sittanvasal — early Pandya period, ninth century CE

Chitrakarapuli (tiger among artists), Chaityakari (temple builder), which show his interest in art activities. The paintings in these temples too were done at his initiative, though only fragments remain. The Panamalai figure of a female divinity is drawn gracefully. Paintings at the Kanchipuram temple were patronised by the Pallava king, Rajsimha. Only traces of paintings remain now which depict Somaskanda. Faces are round and large. Lines are rhythmic with increased ornamentation when compared with the paintings of an earlier periods. Depiction of torso still remains like the earlier sculptural tradition but is elongated.

When the Pandyas came to power, they too patronised art. Tirumalaipuram caves and Jaina caves at Sittanvasal are some of the surviving examples. A few fragmented layers of paintings can be seen in Tirumalaipuram. In Sittanavasal, the paintings are visible on the ceilings of shrines, in verandas, and on the brackets.

On the pillars of the veranda are seen dancing figures of celestial nymphs. The contours of figures are firmly drawn and painted in vermilion red on a lighter background. The body is rendered in yellow with subtle modelling. Supple limbs, expression on the faces of dancers, rhythm in their swaying movement, all speak of the artists' skill in creative imagination in visualising the forms in

Devi — seventh century CE, Panamalai

NCERT not to be republished

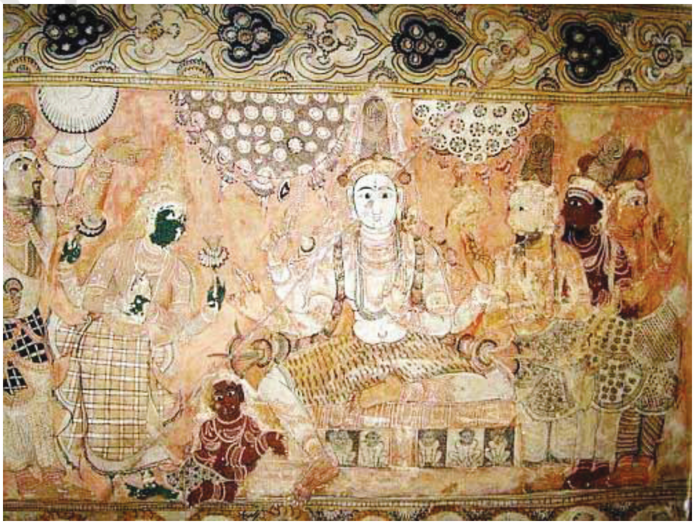
the architectural context. Their eyes are slightly elongated and at times protrude off the face. This feature is observed in many subsequent paintings in the Deccan and South India.

The tradition of building temples and embellishing them with carvings and paintings continued during the reign of the Chola kings who ruled over the region from the ninth to the thirteenth century. But it was in the eleventh century, when the Cholas reached their zenith of power, that masterpieces of the Chola art and architecture began to appear. The temples of Brihadeswara at Thanjavur, Gangaikonda Cholapuram and Darasuram in Tamil Nadu were built during the reigns of Rajaraja Chola, his son, Rajendra Chola and Raj a raja Chola II, respectively.

Though Chola paintings are seen in Nartamalai, the most important are those in Brihadeswara temple. The paintings were executed on the walls of the narrow passage surrounding the shrine. Two layers of paintings were found when they were discovered. The upper layer was painted during the Nayak period, in the sixteenth century. Thanks to the cleaning of the surface painting, examples of the great tradition of painting during the Chola period were unveiled. The paintings show narrations and aspects related to Lord Shiva, Shiva in Kailash, Shiva as Tripurantaka, Shiva as Nataraja, a portrait of the patron Rajaraja and his mentor Kuruvar, dancing figures, etc.

Vijayanagara Murals

The paintings of Brihadeswara temple exemplify the stylistic maturity the artists evolved over the years. Sinuous pre-determined flow of lines, supple modelling of figures,



Dakshinamurty, Vijayanagar, Lepakshi

© NCERT not to be republished

elongation of the physiognomic features of human figures—all these represent the perfection the Chola artist had achieved during the period on the one hand and the phase of transition on the other. With the decline of power of the Chola dynasty in the thirteenth century, the Vijayanagara Dynasty (fourteenth-sixteenth centuries) captured and brought under its control the region from Hampi to Trichy with Hampi serving as its capital. Many paintings survive in a number of temples. The paintings at Tiruparakunram, near Trichy, done in the fourteenth century represent the early phase of the Vijayanagara style. In Hampi, the Virupaksha temple has paintings on the ceiling of its *mandapa* narrating events from dynastic history and episodes from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Among the important panels are the ones which show Vidyaranya, the spiritual teacher of Bukkaraya Harsha, being carried in a palanquin in a procession and the incarnations of Vishnu. The faces of the figures are shown in profile, with large frontal eyes. The figures have narrow waists.

In Lepakshi, near Hindupur, in present Andhra Pradesh, there are glorious examples of Vijayanagara paintings on the walls of the Shiva temple.

In keeping with the tradition, the Vijayanagara painters evolved a pictorial language wherein the faces are shown in profile and figures and objects two-dimensionally. Lines become still but fluid, compositions appear in rectilinear compartments. These stylistic conventions of the preceding centuries were adopted by artists in various centres in South India as can be seen in the paintings of the Nayaka Period.

Paintings of the Nayaka dynasty in the seventeenth and eigtheenth centuries are seen in Thiruparakunram,

Ladies attending Parvati, Virbhadra Temple, Lepakshi

© NCERT not to be republished

Sreerangam and Tiruvarur in Tamil Nadu. In Thiruparakunram, paintings are found of two different periods—of the fourteenth and the seventeenth century. Early paintings depict scenes from the life of Vardhaman Mahavira.

The Nayaka paintings depict episodes from the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* and also scenes from *Krishna-leela*. In Tiruvarur, there is a panel narrating the story of Muchukunda. In Chidambaram, there are panels of paintings narrating stories related to Shiva and Vishnu—Shiva as *Bhikshatana Murti*, Vishnu as *Mohini*, etc.

In the Sri Krishna temple at Chengam in Arcot District there are 60 panels narrating the story of the *Ramayana* which represent the late phase of Nayaka paintings.

The examples cited above suggest that Nayaka paintings were more or less an extension of the Vijayanagara style with minor regional modifications and incorporations. The figures, mostly in profile, are set against a flat background. Male figures are shown slim-waisted but with less heavy abdoman as compared to those in Vijayanagara. The artist, as in the previous centuries and following traditions, has tried to infuse movement and make the space dynamic. The painting of Nataraja at Tiruvalanjuli is a good example.

Kerala Murals

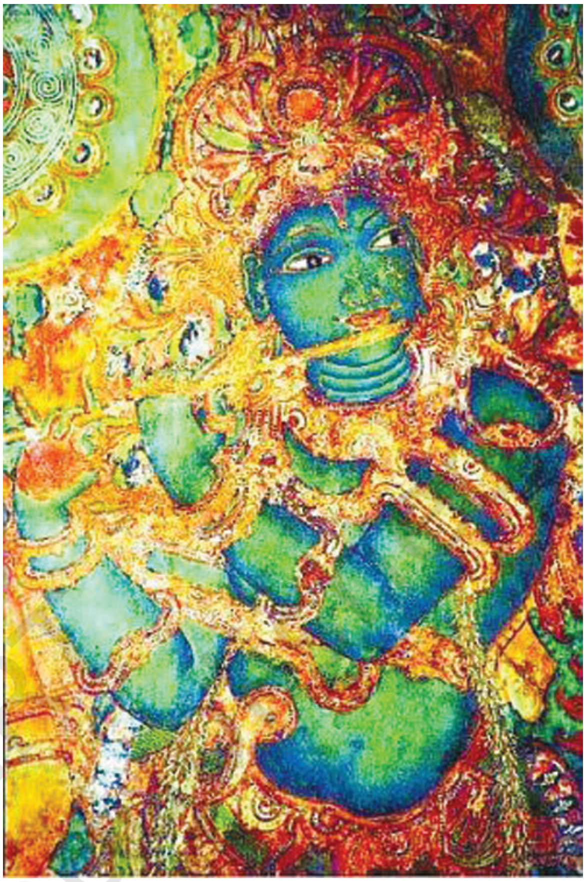
Kerala painters (during the period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century) evolved a pictorial language and technique of their own while discriminately adopting certain stylistic elements from Nayaka and Vijayanagara schools. The painters evolved a language taking cues from contemporary traditions, like Kathakali and *kalam ezhuthu*

Venugopal, Sri Rama Temple, Triprayar

© NCERT not to be republished

(ritual floor painting of Kerala), using vibrant and luminous colours, representing human figures in three-dimensionality. Most of the paintings are seen on the walls of shrines and cloister walls of temples and some inside palaces. Thematically too, paintings from Kerala stand apart. Most of the narrations are based on those episodes from Hindu mythology which were popular in Kerala. The artist seems to have derived sources from oral traditions and local versions of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* for painted narration.

More than sixty sites have been found with mural paintings which include three palaces—Dutch palace in Kochi, Krishnapuram palace in Kayamkulam and Padmanabhapuram palace. Among the sites where one can see the mature phase of Kerala's mural painting tradition are Pundareekapuram Krishna temple, Panayanarkavu, Thirukodithanam, Triprayar Sri Rama temple and Trissur Vadakkunathan temple.



Krishna playing flute, accompanied by Gopikas, Krishna temple, Pundareekapuram

Even today we observe that mural painting on interior and exterior walls of houses in villages or *havelis* is prevalent in different parts of the country. These paintings are usually made by women either at the time of ceremonies or festivals or as a routine to clean and decorate the walls. Some of the traditional forms of murals are *pithoro* in parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat, Mithila painting in northern Bihar's Mithila region, *warli* paintings in Maharashtra, or simply paintings on the walls, be it in a village of Odisha or Bengal, Madhya Pradesh or Chhattisgarh.

EXERCISE

1. What are the main features of Badami cave paintings?
2. Write an essay on Vijayanagara paintings.
3. Describe the mural traditions of Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

© NCERT not to be republished

Reprint 2026-27

Temple architecture in India

(Outline map not to scale)

11144CH06

6

TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE AND SCULPTURE

MOST of the art and architectural remains that survive from Ancient and Medieval India are religious in nature. That does not mean that people did not have art in their homes at those times, but domestic dwellings and the things in them were mostly made from materials like wood and clay which have perished. This chapter introduces us to many types of temples from India. Although we have focussed mostly on Hindu temples, at the end of the chapter you will find some information on major Buddhist and Jain temples too. However, at all times, we must keep in mind that religious shrines were also made for many local cults in villages and forest areas, but again, not being of stone the ancient or medieval shrines in those areas have also vanished.

Today when we say 'temple' in English we generally mean a *devalaya, devkula mandir, kovil, deol, devasthanam or prasada* depending on which part of India we are in.

© NCERT not to be republished

Early Temples

While construction of *stupas* continued, Brahmanical temples and images of gods also started getting constructed. Often temples were decorated with the images of gods. Myths mentioned in the *Puranas* became part of narrative representation of the Brahmanical religion. Each temple had a principal image of a god. The shrines of the temples were of three kinds—(i) *sandhara* type (with *pradikshinapatha*), (ii) *nirandhara* type (without *pradakshinapatha*), and (iii) *sarvatobhadra* (which can be accessed from all sides). Some of the important temple sites of this period are Deogarh in Uttar

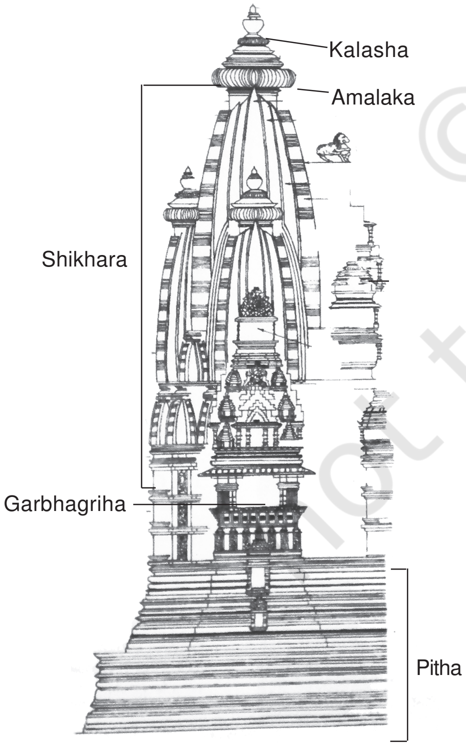
Chatur Mukhlinga, Nachna- Kuthara (Inset)

Shiva temple, Nachna-Kuthara, Madhya Pradesh, fifth century CE

Pradesh, Eran, Nachna-Kuthara and Udaygiri near Vidisha in Madhya Pradesh. These temples are simple structures consisting of a veranda, a hall and a shrine at the rear.

The Basic Form of the Hindu Temple

The basic form of the Hindu temple comprises the following: (i) sanctum (*garbhagriha* literally 'womb-house'), which was a small cubicle with a single entrance and grew into a larger chamber in time. The *garbhagriha* is made to house the main icon which is itself the focus of much ritual attention; (ii) the entrance to the temple which may be a portico or colonnaded hall that incorporates space for a large number of worshippers and is known as a *mandapa*; (iii) freestanding temples tend to have a mountain-like spire, which can take the shape of a curving *shikhar* in North India and a pyramidal tower, called a *vimana,* in South India; (iv) the *vahan,* i.e., the mount or vehicle of the temple's main deity along with a standard pillar or *dhvaj* is placed axially before the sanctum. Two broad orders of temples in the country are known— *Nagara* in the north and *Dravida* in the south. At times, the *Vesar* style of temples as an independent style created through the selective mixing of the *Nagara* and *Dravida* orders is mentioned by some scholars. Elaborate studies are available on the various sub-styles within these orders. We will look into the differences in the forms further on in this chapter. As temples grew more complex, more surfaces were created for sculpture through additive geometry, i.e., by adding more and more rhythmically projecting, symmetrical walls and niches, without breaking away from the fundamental plan of the shrine.



Nagara temple

Sculpture, Iconography and Ornamentation

The study of images of deities falls within a branch of art history called 'iconography', which consists of identification of images based on certain symbols and mythologies associated with them. And very often, while the fundamental myth and meaning of the deity may remain the same for centuries, its specific usage at a spot can be a response to its local or immediate social, political or geographical context.

Every region and period produced its own distinct style of images with its regional variations in iconography. The temple is covered with elaborate sculpture and ornament that form a fundamental part of its conception. The placement of an image in a temple is carefully planned:

© NCERT not to be republished

for instance, river goddesses (Ganga and Yamuna) are usually found at the entrance of a *garbhagriha* in a *Nagara* temple, *dvarapalas* (doorkeepers) are usually found on the gateways or *gopurams* of *Dravida* temples, similarly, *mithunas* (erotic images), *navagrahas* (the nine auspicious planets) and *yakshas* are also placed at entrances to guard them. Various forms or aspects of the main divinity are to be found on the outer walls of the sanctum. The deities of directions, i.e., the *ashtadikpalas* face the eight key directions on the outer walls of the sanctum and/or on the outer walls of a temple. Subsidiary shrines around the main temple are dedicated to the family or incarnations of the main deity. Finally, various elements of ornamentation such as *gavaksha, vyala/yali, kalpa-lata, amalaka, kalasha,* etc. are used in distinct ways and places in a temple.

THE *NAGARA* OR NORTH INDIAN TEMPLE STYLE

The style of temple architecture that became popular in northern India is known as *nagara*. In North India it is common for an entire temple to be built on a stone platform with steps leading up to it. Further, unlike in South India it does not usually have elaborate boundary walls or gateways. While the earliest temples had just one tower, or *shikhara*, later temples had several. The *garbhagriha* is always located directly under the tallest tower.

There are many subdivisions of *nagara* temples depending on the shape of the *shikhara*. There are different names for the various parts of the temple in different parts

Sun temple, Konark

© NCERT not to be republished

of India; however, the most common name for the simple *shikhara* which is square at the base and whose walls curve or slope inward to a point on top is called the 'latina' or the *rekha-prasada* type of shikara.

The second major type of architectural form in the *nagara* order is the *phamsana*. *Phamsana* buildings tend to be broader and shorter than latina ones. Their roofs are composed of several slabs that gently rise to a single point over the centre of the building, unlike the latina ones which look like sharply rising tall towers. *Phamsana* roofs do not curve inward, instead they slope upwards on a straight incline. In many North Indian temples you will notice that the *phamsana* design is used for the *mandapas* while the main *garbhagriha* is housed in a latina building. Later on, the latina buildings grew complex, and instead of appearing like a single tall tower, the temple began to support many smaller towers, which were clustered together like rising mountain-peaks with the tallest one being in the centre, and this was the one which was always above the *garbhagriha*.

The third main sub-type of the *nagara* building is what is generally called the *valabhi* type. These are rectangular buildings with a roof that rises into a vaulted chamber. The edge of this vaulted chamber is rounded, like the bamboo or wooden wagons that would have been drawn by bullocks in ancient times. They are usually called 'wagon-vaulted buildings'. As mentioned above, the form of the temple is influenced by ancient building forms that were already in existence before the fifth century CE. The *valabhi* type of building was one of them. For instance, if you study

Dashavtara Vishnu temple, Deogarh, fifth century CE

Sheshashayana Vishnu, Dashavatara temple, Deogarh

© NCERT not to be republished

the ground-plan of many of the Buddhist rock-cut *chaitya* caves, you will notice that they are shaped as long halls which end in a curved back. From the inside, the roof of this portion also looks like a wagon-vaulted roof.

Central India

Ancient temples of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan share many traits. The most visible is that they are made of sandstone. Some of the oldest surviving structural temples from the Gupta Period are in Madhya Pradesh. These are relatively modest-looking shrines each having four pillars that support a small *mandapa* which looks like a simple square porch-like extension before an equally small room that served as the *garbhagriha*. Importantly, of the two such temples that survive, one is at Udaigiri, which is on the outskirts of Vidisha and is part of a larger Hindu complex of cave shrines, while the other one is at Sanchi, near the stupa. This is the first temple having a flat roof. This means that similar developments were being incorporated in the architecture of temples of both the religions.

Deogarh (in Lalitpur District, Uttar Pradesh) was built in the early sixth century CE. That is, about a hundred years or so after the small temples we just learnt about in Sanchi and Udaigiri. This makes it a classic example of a late Gupta Period type of temple. This temple is in the *panchayatana* style of architecture where the main shrine is built on a rectangular plinth with four smaller subsidiary shrines at the four corners (making it a total number of five shrines, hence the name, *panchayatana*). The tall and curvilinear *shikhara* also corroborates this date. The presence of this curving latina or *rekha-prasada* type of *shikhara* also makes it clear that this is an early example of a classic *nagara* style of temple.

Sheshashayana is the form of Vishnu where he is shown reclining on the *sheshanaga* called Ananta. ***Nara-Narayan*** shows the discussion between the human soul and the eternal divine. ***Gajendramoksha*** is the story of achieving *moksha*, symbolically communicated by Vishnu's suppression of an *asura* who had taken the form of an elephant.

This west-facing temple has a grand doorway with standing sculptures of female figures representing the Ganga on the left side and the Yamuna on the right side. The temple depicts Vishnu in various forms, due to which it was assumed that the four subsidiary shrines must also

© NCERT not to be republished

Reprint 2026-27

Vishwanatha temple, Khajuraho

have housed Vishnu's *avatars* and the temple was mistaken for a *dasavatara* temple. In fact, it is not actually known to whom the four subsidiary shrines were originally dedicated. There are three main reliefs of Vishnu on the temple walls: *Sheshashayana* on the south, *Nara-Narayan* on the east and *Gajendramoksha* on the west. The temple is west-facing, which is less common, as most temples are east- or north-facing.

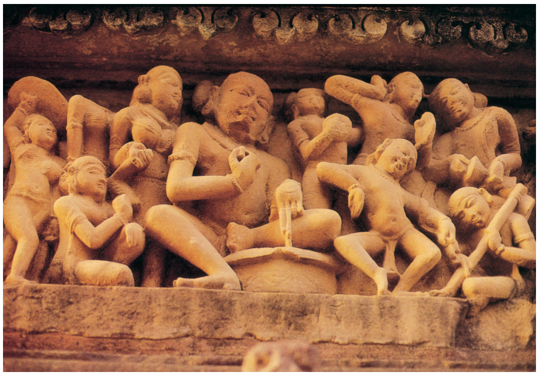
Numerous temples of smaller dimensions have been constructed over a period of time. By contrast, if we study the temples of Khajuraho made by the Chandela Kings in the tenth century, i.e., about four hundred years after the temple at Deogarh, we can see how dramatically the shape and style of the *nagara* temple architecture had developed.

The Lakshmana temple of Khajuraho, dedicated to Vishnu, was built in 954 by the Chandela king, Dhanga. A *nagara* temple, it is placed on a high platform accessed by stairs. There are four smaller temples in the corners, and all the towers or *shikharas* rise high, upward in a curved pyramidal fashion, emphasising the temple's vertical thrust ending in a horizontal fluted disc called an *amalak* topped with a *kalash* or vase. The crowning elements: *amalak* and *kalash*, are to be found on all *nagara* temples of this period. The temple also has projecting balconies and verandahs, thus very different from Deogarh.

Kandariya Mahadeo temple, Khajuraho

Kandariya Mahadeo temple at Khajuraho is the epitome of temple architecture in Central India. In the architecture and the sculptures of this temple, which is a massive structure, we see all features of central Indian temples of the medival period for which they are known and appreciated all over. Khajuraho's temples are also known for their extensive erotic sculptures; the erotic expression is given equal importance in human experience as spiritual pursuit, and it is seen as part of a larger cosmic whole. Many Hindu temples, therefore, feature *mithun* (embracing couple) sculptures, considered auspicious. Usually, they are placed at the entrance of the temple or on an exterior

© NCERT not to be republished



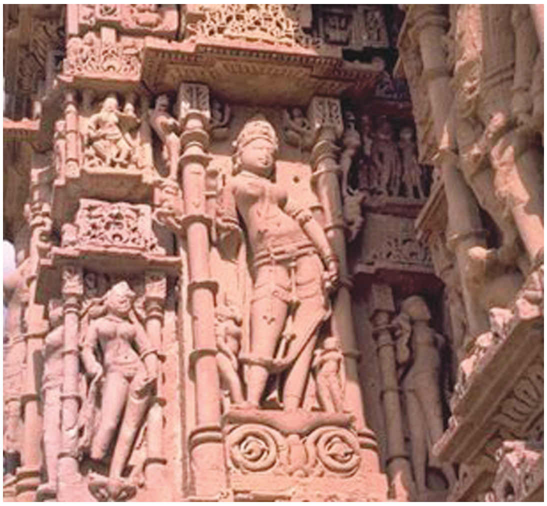
Dance class, Lakshmana Temple, Khajuraho

wall or they may also be placed on the walls between the *mandapa* and the main shrine. Khajuraho's sculptures are highly stylised with typical features: they are in almost full relief, cut away from the surrounding stone, with sharp noses, prominent chins, long slanting eyes and eyebrows.

There are many temples at Khajuraho, most of them devoted to Hindu gods. There are some Jain temples as well as a Chausanth Yogini temple, which is of interest. Predating the tenth century, this is a temple of small, square shrines of roughly-hewn granite blocks, each dedicated to *devis* or goddesses associated with the rise of *Tantric* worship after the seventh century. Several such temples were dedicated to the cult of the *yoginis* across Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and even as far south as Tamil Nadu. They were built between the seventh and tenth centuries, but few have survived.

West India

The temples in the north-western parts of India including Gujarat and Rajasthan, and stylistically extendable, at times, to western Madhya Pradesh are too numerous to include



Sun temple, Modhera, Gujarat

© NCERT not to be republished

Sun temple, Modhera, Gujarat

here in any comprehensive way. The stone used to build the temples ranges in colour and type. While sandstone is the commonest, a grey to black basalt can be seen in some of the tenth to twelveth century temple sculptures. The most exuberant and famed is the manipulatable soft white marble which is also seen in some of the tenth to twelveth century Jain temples in Mount Abu and the fifteenth century temple at Ranakpur.

Among the most important art-historical sites in the region is Samlaji in Gujarat which shows how earlier artistic traditions of the region mixed with a post-Gupta style and gave rise to a distinct style of sculpture. A large number of sculptures made of grey schist have been found in this region which can be dated between the sixth and eighth centuries CE. While the patronage of these is debated, the date is established on the basis of the style.

The Sun temple at Modhera dates back to early eleventh century and was built by Raja Bhimdev I of the Solanki Dynasty in 1026. There is a massive rectangular stepped tank called the *surya kund* in front of it. Proximity of sacred architecture to a water body such as a tank, a river or a pond has been noticed right from the earliest times. By the early eleventh century they had become a part of many temples. This hundred-square-metre rectangular pond is perhaps the grandest temple tank in India. A hundred and eight miniature shrines are carved in between the steps inside the tank. A huge ornamental arch-*torana* leads one to the *sabha mandapa* (the assembly hall) which is open on all sides, as was the fashion of the times in western and central Indian temples.

The influence of the woodcarving tradition of Gujarat is evident in the lavish carving and sculpture work. However, the walls of the central small shrine are devoid of carving and are left plain as the temple faces the east and, every year, at the time of the equinoxes, the sun shines directly into this central shrine.

East India

Eastern Indian temples include those found in the North-East, Bengal and Odisha. Each of these three areas produced distinct types of temples. The history of architecture in the North-East and Bengal is hard to study because a number of ancient buildings in those regions

© NCERT not to be republished

Kamakhya Temple, Assam

were renovated, and what survives now are later brick or concrete temples at those sites. It appears that terracotta was the main medium of construction, and also for moulding plaques which depicted Buddhist and Hindu deities in Bengal until the seventh century. A large number of sculptures have been found in Assam and Bengal which shows the development of important regional schools in those regions.

Assam: An old sixth-century sculpted door frame from DaParvatia near Tezpur and another few stray sculptures from Rangagora Tea Estate near Tinsukia in Assam bear witness to the import of the Gupta idiom in that region. This post-Gupta style continued in the region well into the tenth century. However, by the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, a distinct regional style developed in Assam. The style that came with the migration of the Tais from Upper Burma mixed with the dominant Pala style of Bengal and led to the creation of what was later known as the Ahom style in and around Guwahati. Kamakhya temple, *a Shakti Peeth*, is dedicated to Goddess Kamakhya and was built in the seventeenth century.

Bengal: The style of the sculptures during the period between the ninth and eleventh centuries in Bengal (including Bangladesh) and Bihar is known as the Pala style, named after the ruling dynasty at the time, while the style of those of the mid-eleventh to mid-thirteenth centuries is named after the Sena kings. While the Palas are celebrated as patrons of many Buddhist monastic sites, the temples from that region are known to express the local Vanga style. The ninth century Siddheshvara

© NCERT not to be republished

Terracotta temple, Vishnupur

Mahadeva temple in Barakar in Burdwan District, for example, shows a tall curving *shikhara* crowned by a large *amalaka* and is an example of the early Pala style. It is similar to contemporaneous temples of Odisha. This basic form grows loftier with the passing of centuries. Many of the temples from the ninth to the twelfth century were located at Telkupi in Purulia District. They were submerged when dams were built in the region. These were amongst the important examples of architectural styles prevalent in the region which showed an awareness of all the known *nagara* sub-types that were prevalent in the rest of North India. However, several temples still survive in Purulia District which can be dated to this period. The black to grey basalt and chlorite stone pillars and arched niches of these temples heavily influenced the earliest Bengal *sultanate* buildings at Gaur and Pandua. Many local vernacular building traditions of Bengal also influenced the style of temples in that region. Most prominent of these was the shape of the curving or sloping side of the bamboo roof of a Bengali hut. This feature was eventually even adopted in Mughal buildings, and is known across North India as the Bangla roof. In the Mughal period and later, scores of terracotta brick temples were built across Bengal and Bangladesh in a unique style that had elements of local building techniques seen in bamboo huts which were combined with older forms reminiscent of the Pala period and with the forms of arches and domes that were taken from Islamic architecture. These can be widely found in and around Vishnupur, Bankura, Burdwan and Birbhum and are dated mostly to the seventeenth century.

© NCERT not to be republished

Stone Chariot, Hampi, Karnataka

Odisha: The main architectural features of Odisha temples are classified in three orders, i.e., *rekhapida*, *pidhadeul* and *khakra*. Most of the main temple sites are located in ancient Kalinga—modern Puri District, including Bhubaneswar or ancient Tribhuvanesvara, Puri and Konark. The temples of Odisha constitute a distinct sub-style within the *nagara* order. In general, here the *shikhara*, called *deul* in Odisha, is vertical almost until the top when it suddenly curves sharply inwards. *Deuls* are preceded, as usual, by *mandapas* called *jagamohana* in Odisha. The ground plan of the main temple is almost always square, which, in the upper reaches of its superstructure becomes circular in the crowning *mastaka*. This makes the spire nearly cylindrical in appearance in its length. Compartments and niches are generally square, the exterior of the temples are lavishly carved, their interiors generally quite bare. Odisha temples usually have boundary walls.

At Konark, on the shores of the Bay of Bengal, lie the majestic ruins of the Surya or Sun temple built in stone around 1240. Its *shikhara* was a colossal creation said to have reached 70m, which, proving too heavy for its site, fell in the nineteenth century. The vast complex is within a quadrilateral precinct of which the *jagamohana* or the dance-pavillion (*mandapa*) has survived, which though no longer accessible is said to be the largest enclosed space in Hindu architecture.

The Sun temple is set on a high base, its walls covered in extensive, detailed ornamental carving. These include twelve pairs of enormous wheels sculpted with spokes and

© NCERT not to be republished

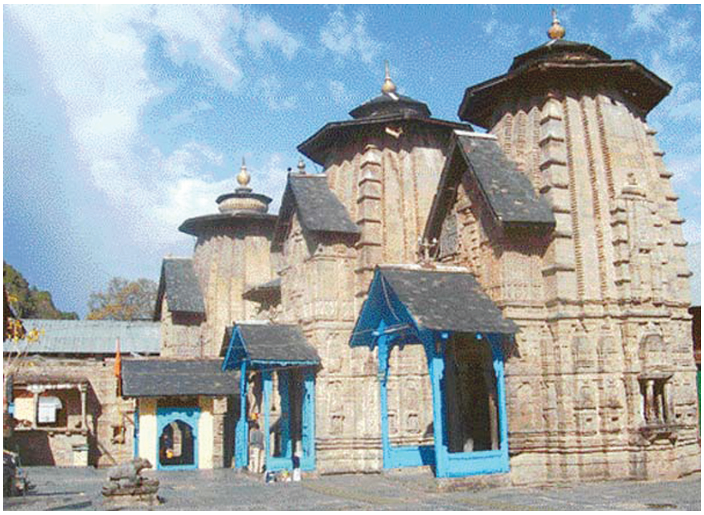
Jagannath temple, Puri

hubs, representing the chariot wheels of the Sun god who, in mythology, rides a chariot driven by seven horses, sculpted here at the entrance staircase. The whole temple thus comes to resemble a colossal processional chariot. On the southern wall is a massive sculpture of *surya* carved out of green stone. It is said that there were three such images, each carved out of a different stone placed on the three temple walls, each facing different directions. The fourth wall had the doorway into the temple from where the actual rays of the sun would enter the *garbhagriha*.

The Hills

A unique form of architecture developed in the hills of Kumaon, Garhwal, Himachal and Kashmir. Kashmir's proximity to prominent Gandhara sites (such as Taxila, Peshawar and the northwest frontier) lent the region a strong Gandhara influence by the fifth century CE. This began to mix with the Gupta and post-Gupta traditions that were brought to it from Sarnath, Mathura and even centres in Gujarat and Bengal. Brahmin *pundits* and Buddhist monks frequently travelled between Kashmir, Garhwal, Kumaon and religious centres in the plains like Banaras, Nalanda and even as far south as Kanchipuram. As a result both Buddhist and Hindu traditions began to intermingle and spread in the hills. The hills also had

© NCERT not to be republished



Temple complexes in Hills

their own tradition of wooden buildings with pitched roofs. At several places in the hills, therefore, you will find that while the main *garbhagriha* and *shikhara* are made in a *rekha-prasada* or latina style, the *mandapa* is of an older form of wooden architecture. Sometimes, the temple itself takes on a pagoda shape.

The Karkota period of Kashmir is the most significant in terms of architecture. One of the most important temples is Pandrethan, built during the eighth and ninth centuries. In keeping with the tradition of a water tank attached to the shrine, this temple is built on a plinth built in the middle of a tank. Although there are evidences of both Hindu and Buddhist followings in Kashmir, this temple is a Hindu one, possibly dedicated to Shiva. The architecture of this temple is in keeping with the age-old Kashmiri tradition of wooden buildings. Due to the snowy conditions in Kashmir, the roof is peaked and slants slowly outward. The temple is moderately ornamented, moving away from the post-Gupta aesthetics of heavy carving. A row of elephants at the base and a decorated doorway are the only embellishments on the shrine.

Like the findings at Samlaji, the sculptures at Chamba also show an amalgamation of local traditions with a post-Gupta style. The images of *Mahishasuramardini* and *Narasimha* at the *Laksna-Devi Mandir* are evidences of the influence of the post-Gupta tradition. Both the images show the influence of the metal sculpture tradition of Kashmir. The yellow colour of the images is possibly due to an alloy of zinc and copper which were popularly used to make images in Kashmir. This temple bears an inscription that states that it was built during the reign of Meruvarman who lived in the seventh century.

© NCERT not to be republished

Meenakshi temple, Madurai

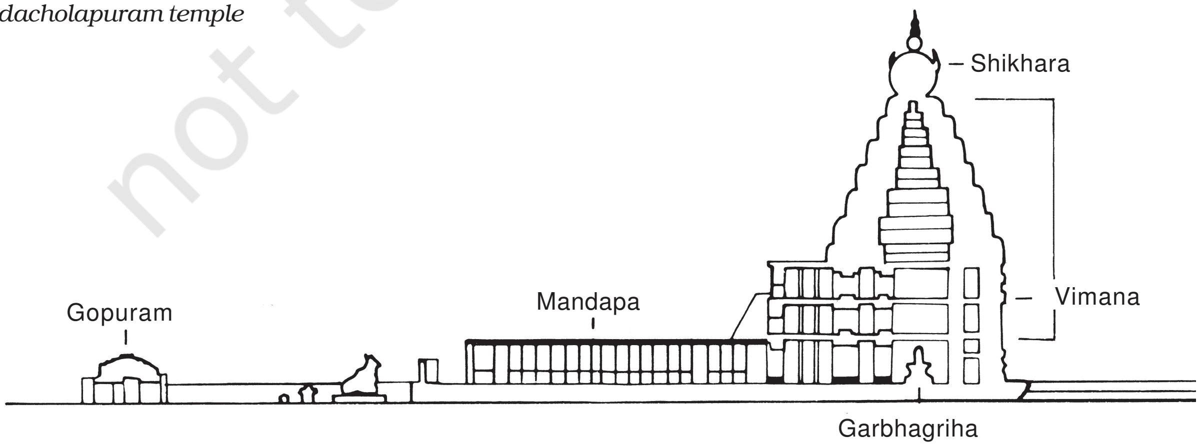
Gangaikondacholapuram temple

Of the temples in Kumaon, the ones at Jageshwar near Almora, and Champavat near Pithoragarh, are classic examples of *nagara* architecture in the region.

THE *DRAVIDA* OR SOUTH INDIAN TEMPLE STYLE

Unlike *the nagara* temple, the *dravida* temple is enclosed within a compound wall. The front wall has an entrance gateway in its centre, which is known as a *gopuram*. The shape of the main temple tower known as *vimana* in Tamil Nadu is like a stepped pyramid that rises up geometrically rather than the curving *shikhara* of North India. In the South Indian temple, the word *'shikhara'* is used only for the crowning element at the top of the temple which is usually shaped like a small *stupika* or an octagonal cupola—this is equivalent to the *amlak* and *kalasha* of North Indian temples. Whereas at the entrance to the North Indian temple's *garbhagriha*, it would be usual to find images such as *mithunas* and the river goddesses, Ganga and Yamuna, in the south you will generally find sculptures of fierce *dvarapalas* or the door-keepers guarding the temple. It is common to find a large water reservoir, or a temple tank, enclosed within the complex. Subsidiary shrines are either incorporated within the main temple tower, or located as distinct, separate small shrines beside the main temple. The North Indian idea of multiple *shikharas* rising together as a cluster was not popular in South India. At some of the most sacred temples in South India, the main temple in which the *garbhagriha* is situated has, in fact, one of the smallest towers. This is because it is usually the oldest part of the temple. With the passage of time, the population and size of the town associated with that temple would have increased, and it would have become necessary to

Dravida temple



© NCERT not to be republished

make a new boundary wall around the temple. This would have been taller that the last one, and its *gopurams* would have been even loftier. So, for instance, the Srirangam temple in Tiruchirapally has as many as seven 'concentric' rectangular enclosure walls, each with *gopurams*. The outermost is the newest, while the tower right in the centre housing the *garbhagriha* is the oldest.

Temples thus started becoming the focus of urban architecture. Kanchipuram, Thanjavur or Tanjore, Madurai and Kumbakonam are the most famous temple towns of Tamil Nadu, where, during the eighth to twelfth centuries, the role of the temple was not limited to religious matters alone. Temples became rich administrative centres, controlling vast areas of land.

Just as there are many subdivisions of the main types of *nagara* temples, there are subdivisions also of *dravida* temples. These are basically of five different shapes: square, usually called *kuta*, and also *caturasra*; rectangular or *shala* or *ayatasra*; elliptical, called *gaja-prishta* or elephant-backed, or also called *vrittayata*, deriving from wagon-vaulted shapes of apsidal *chaityas* with a horse-shoe shaped entrance facade usually called a *nasi*; circular or *vritta;* and octagonal or *ashtasra*. Generally speaking, the plan of the temple and the shape of the *vimana* were conditioned by the iconographic nature of the consecrated deity, so it was appropriate to build specific types of temples for specific types of icons. It must, however, be remembered that this is a simplistic differentiation of the subdivisions. Several different shapes may be combined in specific periods and places to create their own unique style.

Shore temple, Mahabalipuram

© NCERT not to be republished

Nandi, Brahadeeshwarar

The Pallavas were one of the ancient South Indian dynasties that were active in the Andhra region from the second century CE onwards and moved south to settle in Tamil Nadu. Their history is better documented from the sixth to the eighth century, when they left many inscriptions in stone and several monuments. Their powerful kings spread their empire to various parts of the subcontinent, at times reaching the borders of Odisha, and their links with South–East Asia were also strong. Although they were mostly Shaivite, several Vaishnava shrines also survived from their reign, and there is no doubt that they were influenced by the long Buddhist history of the Deccan.

Their early buildings, it is generally assumed, were rock-cut, while the later ones were structural. However, there is reason to believe that structural buildings were well known even when rock-cut ones were being excavated. The early buildings are generally attributed to the reign of Mahendravarman I, a contemporary of the Chalukyan king, Pulakesin II of Karnataka. Narasimhavarman I, also known as Mamalla, who acceded the Pallava throne around 640 CE, is celebrated for the expansion of the empire, avenging the defeat his father had suffered at the hands of Pulakesin II, and inaugurating most of the building works at Mahabalipuram which is known after him as Mamallapuram.

The shore temple at Mahabalipuram was built later, probably in the reign of Narasimhavarman II, also known as Rajasimha who reigned from 700 to 728 CE. Now it is oriented to the east facing the ocean, but if you study it closely, you will find that it actually houses three shrines,

Brahadeeshwarar, Thanjavur

© NCERT not to be republished

Five Rathas, Mahabalipuram

two to Shiva, one facing east and the other west, and a middle one to Vishnu who is shown as *Anantashayana*. This is unusual, because temples generally have a single main shrine and not three areas of worship. This shows that it was probably not originally conceived like this and different shrines may have been added at different times, modified perhaps with the change of patrons. In the compound there is evidence of a water tank, an early example of a *gopuram*, and several other images. Sculptures of the bull, Nandi, Shiva's mount, line the temple walls, and these, along with the carvings on the temple's lower walls have suffered severe disfiguration due to erosion by salt-water laden air over the centuries.

The magnificent Shiva temple of Thanjavur, called the Rajarajeswara or Brahadeeshwarar temple, was completed around 1009 by Rajaraja Chola, and is the largest and tallest of all Indian temples. Temple building was prolific at this time, and over a hundred important temples of the Chola period are in a good state of preservation, and many more are still active shrines. Bigger in scale than anything built by their predecessors, the Pallavas, Chalukyas or Pandyas, this Chola temple's pyramidal multi-storeyed *vimana* rises a massive, 70 metre (230 ft. approx) structure topped by a monolithic *shikhara* which is an octagonal dome-shaped *stupika*. It is in this temple that one notices for the first time two large *gopuras* (gateway towers) with an elaborate sculptural programme which was conceived along with the temple. Huge Nandi-figures dot the corners of the *shikhara*, and the *kalasha* on top by itself is about three metres and eight centimetres in height. Hundreds of stucco figures decorate the *vimana*, although it is possible that some of these may have been added on during the Maratha Period and did not always belong to the Chola Period. The main deity of the temple is Shiva, who is shown as a huge *lingam* set in a two-storeyed

© NCERT not to be republished

sanctum. The walls surrounding the sanctum have extended mythological narratives which are depicted through painted murals and sculptures.

Architecture in the Deccan

Many different styles of temple architecture influenced by both North and South Indian temples were used in regions like Karnataka. While some scholars consider the buildings in this region as being distinctly either *nagara* or *dravida*, a hybridised style that seems to have become popular after the mid-seventh century, is known in some ancient texts as *vesara*.

By the late seventh or the early eighth century, the ambitious projects at Ellora became even grander. By about 750 CE, the early western Chalukya control of the Deccan was taken by the Rashtrakutas. Their greatest achievement in architecture is the Kailashnath temple at Ellora, a culmination of at least a millennium-long tradition in rock-cut architecture in India. It is a complete *dravida* building with a Nandi shrine—since the temple is dedicated to Shiva—a *gopuram*-like gateway, surrounding cloisters, subsidiary shrines, staircases and an imposing tower or *vimana* rising to thirty metres. Importantly, all of this is carved out of living rock. One portion of the monolithic hill was carved patiently to build the Kailashnath temple. The sculpture of the Rashtrakuta phase at Ellora is dynamic, the figures often larger than life-size, infused with unparalleled grandeur and the most overwhelming energy.

In the southern part of the Deccan, i.e., in the region of Karnataka is where some of the most experimental

Kailashnath temple, Ellora

© NCERT not to be republished

Temple, Badami

hybrid styles of *vesara* architecture are to be found. Pulakesin I established the western Chalukya kingdom when he secured the land around Badami in 543. The early western Chalukyas ruled most of the Deccan till the mid-eighth century when they were superseded by the Rashtrakutas. Early Chalukyan activity also takes the form of rock-cut caves while later activity is of structural temples. The earliest is probably the Ravana Phadi cave at Aihole which is known for its distinctive sculptural style. One of the most important sculptures at the site is of Nataraja, surrounded by larger-than-life-size depictions of the *saptamatrikas*: three to Shiva's left and four to his right. The figures are characterised by graceful, slim bodies, long, oval faces topped with extremely tall cylindrical crowns and shown to wear short *dhotis* marked by fine incised striations indicating pleating. They are distinctly different from

© NCERT not to be republished

Durga temple, Aihole

Virupaksha temple, Pattadakal

contemporary western Deccan or Vakataka styles seen at places such as Paunar and Ramtek in Maharashtra.

The hybridisation and incorporation of several styles was the hallmark of Chalukyan buildings. The most elaborate of all Chalukyan temples at Pattadakal made in the reign of Vikramaditya II (733-44) by his chief queen Loka Mahadevi is Virupaksha temple. Another important temple from this site is Papnath temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva. The temple is one of the best early examples of the *Dravida* tradition. By contrast other eastern Chalukyan Temples, like the Mahakuta, five kilometres from Badami, and the Swarga Brahma temple at Alampur show a greater assimilation of northern styles from Odisha and Rajasthan. At the same time the Durga temple at Aihole is unique having an even earlier style of an apsidal shrine which is reminiscent of Buddhist *chaitya* halls and is surrounded by a veranda of a later kind, with a *shikhara* that is stylistically like a *nagara* one. Finally, mention must be made of the Lad Khan temple at Aihole in Karnataka. This seems to be inspired by the wooden-roofed temples of the hills, except that it is constructed out of stone.

Somnathpuram temple

How then shall we understand these different styles at one place? As curiosities or as innovations? Undoubtedly, they are dynamic expressions of a creative set of architects who were competing with their peers in the rest of India. Whatever one's explanation is, these buildings remain of great art-historical interest.

© NCERT not to be republished

With the waning of Chola and Pandya power, the Hoysalas of Karnataka grew to prominence in South India and became the most important patrons centred at Mysore. The remains of around hundred temples have been found in southern Deccan, though it is only three of them that are most frequently discussed: the temples at Belur, Halebid and Somnathpuram. Perhaps the most characteristic feature of these temples is that they grow extremely complex with so many projecting angles emerging from the previously straightforward square temple, that the plan of these temples starts looking like a star, and is thus known as a stellate-plan. Since they are made out of soapstone which is a relatively soft stone, the artists were able to carve their sculptures intricately. This can be seen particularly in the jewellery of the gods that adorn their temple walls.

The Hoysaleshvara temple (Lord of the Hoysalas) at Halebid in Karnataka was built in dark schist stone by the Hoysala king in 1150. Hoysala temples are sometimes called hybrid or *vesara* as their unique style seems neither completely *dravida* nor *nagara*, but somewhere in between. They are easily distinguishable from other medieval temples by their highly original star-like ground-plans and a profusion of decorative carvings.

Nataraja, Halebid

NCERT not to be republished

Dedicated to Shiva as Nataraja, the Halebid temple is a double building with a large hall for the *mandapa* to facilitate music and dance. A Nandi pavilion precedes each building. The tower of the temple here and at nearby Belur fell long ago, and an idea of the temples' appearance can now only be gleaned from their detailed miniature versions flanking the entrances. From the central square plan cut-out angular projections create the star effect decorated with the most profuse carvings of animals and deities. So intricate is the carving that it is said, for instance, in the bottom-most frieze featuring a continuous procession of hundreds of elephants with their mahouts, no two elephants are in the same pose.

Founded in 1336, Vijayanagara, literally 'city of victory', attracted a number of international travellers such as the Italian, Niccolo di Conti, the Portuguese Domingo Paes, Fernao Nuniz and Duarte Barbosa and the Afghan Abd al-Razzaq, who have left vivid accounts of the city. In addition, various Sanskrit and Telugu works document the vibrant literary tradition of this kingdom. Architecturally, Vijayanagara synthesises the centuries-old *dravida* temple architecture with Islamic styles demonstrated by the neighbouring sultanates. Their sculpture too, although fundamentally derived from, and consciously seeking to recreate Chola ideals, occasionally shows the presence of foreigners. Their eclectic ruins from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries preserve a fascinating time in history, an age of wealth, exploration and cultural fusion.

BUDDHIST AND JAIN ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

So far, although we have focused on the nature of developments in Hindu architecture from the fifth to fourteenth centuries, it must constantly be kept in mind that this was also the very period when Buddhist and Jain developments were equally vibrant, and often went hand-in-glove with Hindu ones. Sites such as Ellora have Buddhist, Hindu and Jain monuments; however, Badami, Khajuraho and Kannauj have the remains of any two of the religions right next to each other.

When the Gupta empire crumbled in the sixth century CE, this eastern region of Bihar and Bengal, historically known as Magadha, appears to have remained unified whilst numerous small Rajput principalities sprang up to the west. In the eighth century, the Palas came to power in the region. The second Pala ruler, Dharmapala, became immensely powerful and established an empire by defeating

© NCERT not to be republished

the powerful Rajput Pratiharas. Dharmapala consolidated an empire whose wealth lay in a combination of agriculture along the fertile Ganges plain and international trade.

The pre-eminent Buddhist site is, of course, Bodhgaya. Bodhgaya is a pilgrimage site since Siddhartha achieved enlightenment here and became Gautama Buddha. While the *bodhi* tree is of immense importance, the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhgaya is an important reminder of the brickwork of that time. The first shrine here, located at the base of the Bodhi tree, is said to have been constructed by King Ashoka; the *vedika* around it is said to be post-Mauryan, of about 100 BCE; many of the sculptures in the niches in the temple are dated to the eighth century Pala Period, while the actual Mahabodhi temple itself as it stands now is largely a Colonial Period reconstruction of the old seventh century design. The design of the temple is unusual. It is, strictly speaking, neither *dravida* or *nagara*. It is narrow like a *nagara* temple, but it rises without curving, like a *dravida* one.

Mahabodhi temple, Bodhgaya

Nalanda University

The monastic university of Nalanda is a *mahavihara* as it is a complex of several monastries of various sizes. Till date, only a small portion of this ancient learning centre has been excavated as most of it lies buried under contemporary civilisation, making further excavations almost impossible.

Most of the information about Nalanda is based on the records of Xuan Zang—previously spelt as 'Hsuan-tsang'—which states that the foundation of a monastery was laid by Kumargupta I in the fifth century CE; and this was carried forward by the later monarchs who built up a fantastic university here. There is evidence that all three Buddhist doctrines— Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana—were taught here and monks made their way to Nalanda and its neighbouring sites of Bodhgaya and Kurkihar from China, Tibet and Central Asia in the north, and Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma and various other countries from the south-eastern parts of Asia. Monks and pilgrims would take back small sculptures and illustrated manuscripts from here to their own countries. Buddhist monasteries like Nalanda, thus, were prolific centres of art production that had a decisive impact on the arts of all Buddhist countries in Asia.

The sculptural art of Nalanda, in stucco, stone and bronze, developed out of a heavy dependence on the Buddhist Gupta art of Sarnath. By the ninth century a synthesis occurred between the Sarnath Gupta idiom, the local Bihar tradition, and that of central India, leading to the formation of the Nalanda school of sculpture characterised by distinctive facial features, body forms and treatment of clothing and jewellery. The characteristic features of Nalanda art, distinguished by its consistently high quality of workmanship, are that the precisely executed sculptures have an ordered appearance with little effect of crowding. Sculptures are also usually not flat in relief but are depicted in three-dimensional forms. The back slabs of the sculptures are detailed and the ornamentations delicate. The Nalanda bronzes, dating between the seventh and eighth centuries to approximately the twelfth century outnumber the discovery of metal images from all other sites of eastern India and constitute a large body of Pala Period metal sculptures. Like their stone counterparts, the bronzes initially relied heavily on Sarnath and Mathura Gupta traditions. The Nalanda sculptures initially depict Buddhist deities of the Mahayana pantheon such as standing Buddhas, *bodhisattvas* such as Manjusri Kumara, Avalokiteshvara seated on a lotus and Naga-Nagarjuna. During the late eleventh and twelveth

Sculptural details, Nalanda

© NCERT not to be republished

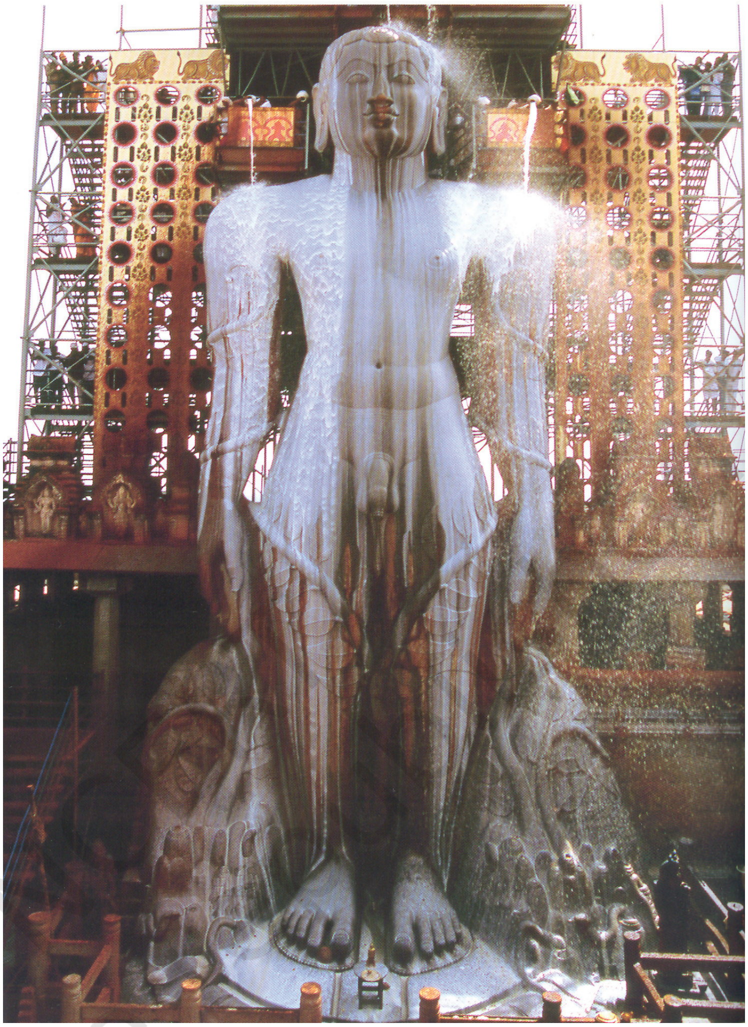
Excavated site, Nalanda

centuries, when Nalanda emerged as an important tantric centre, the repertoire came to be dominated by Vajrayana deities such as Vajrasharada (a form of Saraswati) Khasarpana, Avalokiteshvara, etc. Depictions of crowned Buddhas occur commonly only after the tenth century. Interestingly, various brahmanical images not conforming to the Sarnath style have also been found at Nalanda, many of which are still worshipped in small temples in villages around the site.

Sirpur in Chhattisgarh is an early-Odisha style site belonging to the period between 550 and 800, with both Hindu and Buddhist shrines. In many ways the iconographic and stylistic elements of the Buddhist sculptures here are similar to that of Nalanda. Later other

Lakshmana temple, Sirpur

© NCERT not to be republished



Lord Bahubali, Gomateshwara, Karnataka

major Buddhist monasteries developed in Odisha. Lalitagiri, Vajragiri and Ratnagiri are the most famous of them.

The port-town of Nagapattinam was also a major Buddhist centre right until the Chola Period. One of the reasons for this must have been its importance in trade with Sri Lanka where large numbers of Buddhists still live. Bronze and stone sculptures in Chola style have come to light at Nagapattinam and generally date back to the tenth century.

Jains were prolific temple builders like the Hindus, and their sacred shrines and pilgrimage spots are to be found across the length and breadth of India except in the hills. The oldest Jain pilgrimage sites are to be found in Bihar. Many of these sites are famous for early Buddhist shrines. In the Deccan, some of the most architecturally important Jain sites can be found in Ellora and Aihole. In central India, Deogarh, Khajuraho, Chanderi and Gwalior have some excellent examples of Jain temples. Karnataka

© not to be republished

has a rich heritage of Jain shrines and at Sravana Belagola the famous statue of Gomateshwara, the granite statue of Lord Bahubali which stands eighteen metres or fifty-seven feet high, is the world's tallest monolithic free-standing structure. It was commissioned by Camundaraya, the General-in-Chief and Prime Minister of the Ganga Kings of Mysore.

The Jain temples at Mount Abu were constructed by Vimal Shah. Notable for a simplistic exterior in contrast with the exuberant marble interiors, their rich sculptural decoration with deep undercutting creates a lace-like appearance. The temple is famous for its unique patterns on every ceiling, and the graceful bracket figures along the domed ceilings. The great Jain pilgrimage site in the Shatrunjay hills near Palitana in Kathiawar, Gujarat, is imposing with scores of temples clustered together.

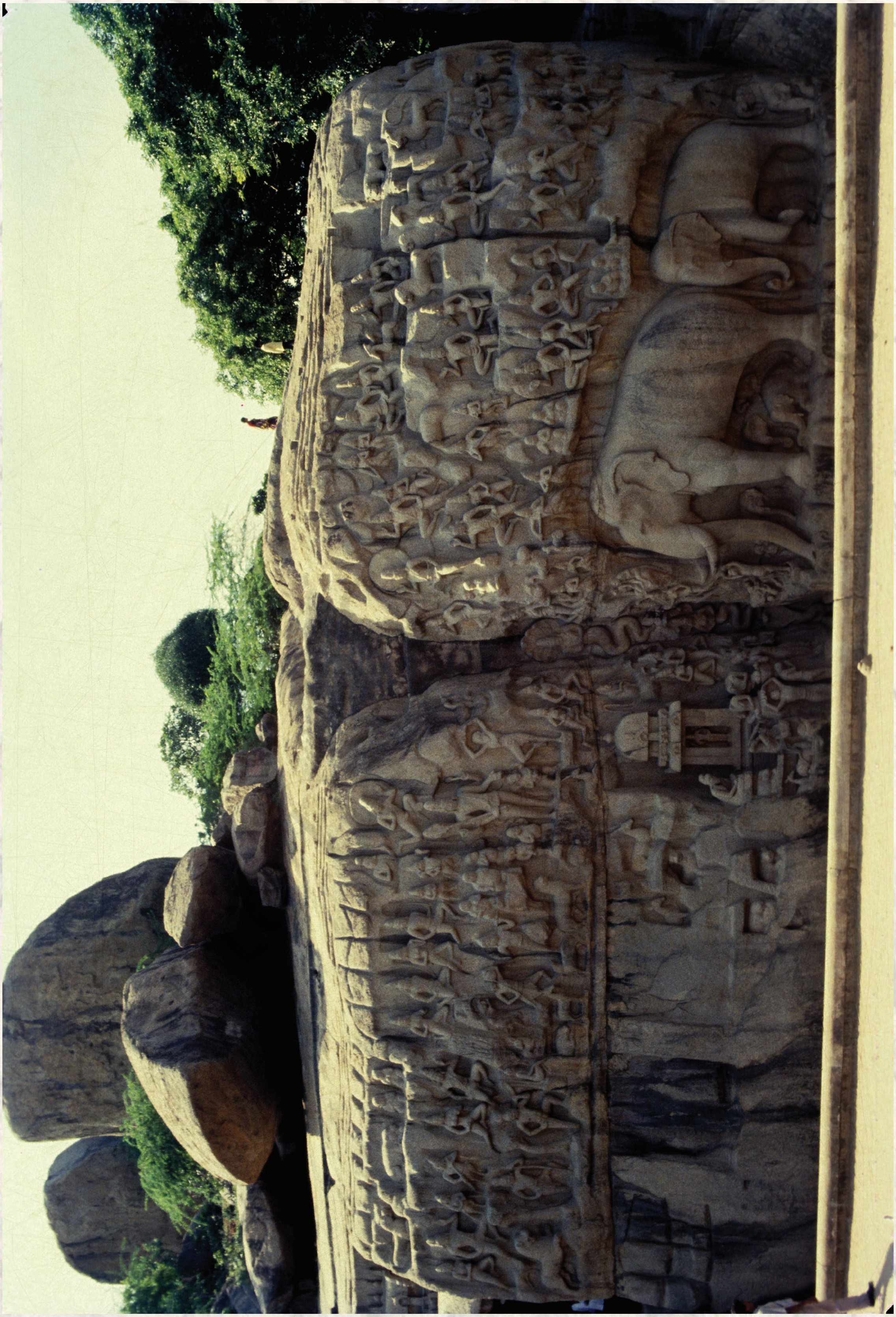
Jain sculpture, Mount Abu

In this chapter we have read about the prolific sculptural and architectural remains in different types of stone, terracotta and bronze from the fifth to the fourteenth centuries. Undoubtedly there would have been sculptures made of other media like silver and gold, but these would have been melted down and reused. Many sculptures would also have been made of wood and ivory, but these have perished because of their fragility. Often sculptures would have been painted, but again, pigments cannot always survive hundreds of years, especially if the sculptures were exposed to the elements. There was also a rich tradition of painting at this time, but the only examples that survive from this period are murals in a few religious buildings.

Dilwara temple, Mount Abu

© NCERT not to be republished

MAHABALIPURAM



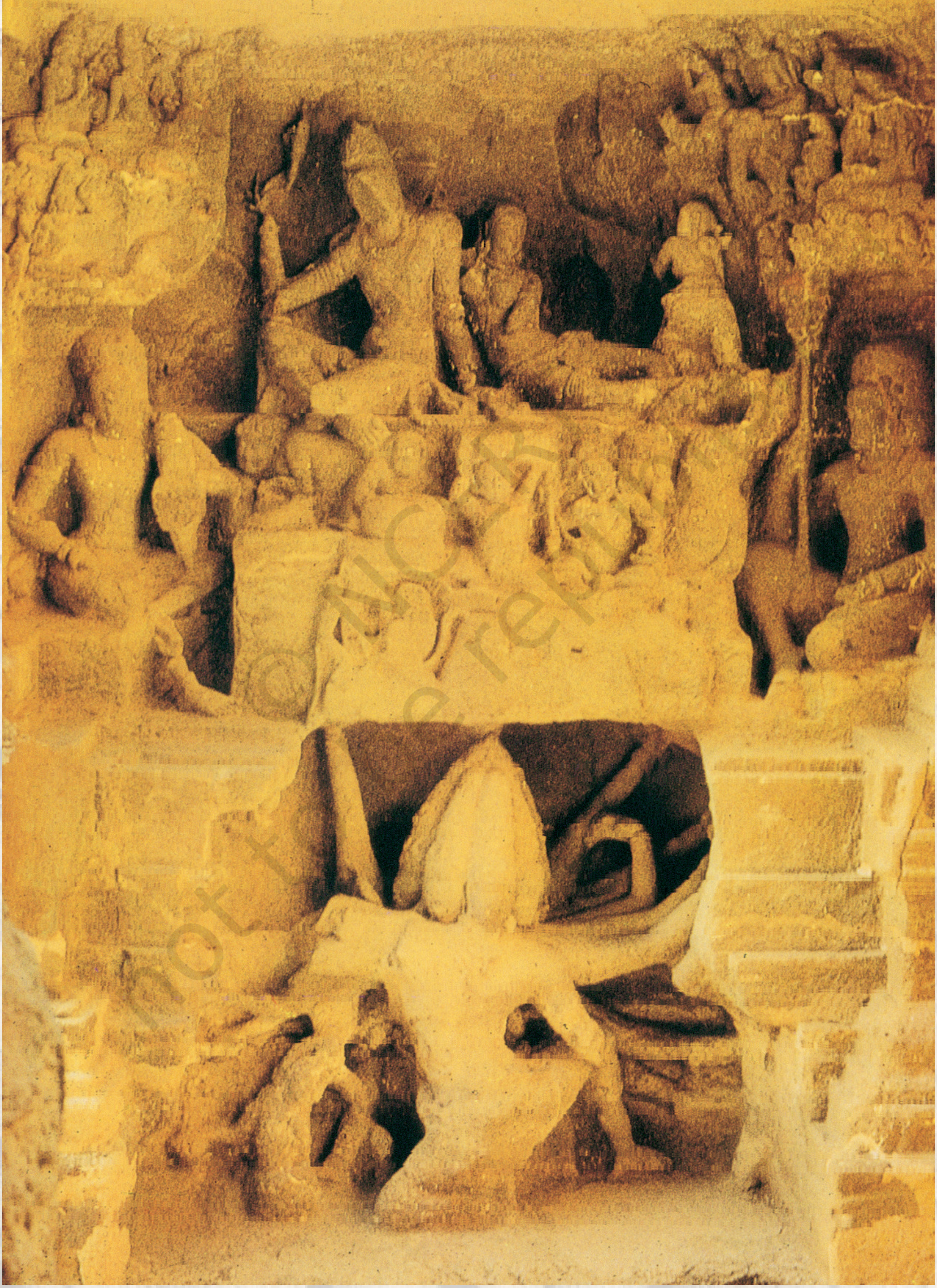
Mahabalipuram is an important coastal town from the period of the Pallavas. It is dotted with several important rock-cut and free-standing structural temples mostly made in the seventh and eighth centuries. This large sculptural panel, one of the largest and oldest known in the world, is nearly thirty metres long and fifteen metres high. There is a natural cleft in the rock which has been cleverly used by its sculptors as a channel for water to flow down. This water collects in a massive tank in front of the sculpted wall.

Scholars have interpreted the story depicted on the panel differently. While some believe that it is the story of the descent of the Ganga from heaven to earth, others believe that the main story is of *Kiratarjuniya* or Arjuna's penance, a poetic work by Bharvi which is known to have been popular in the Pallava court. Other scholars have interpreted the symbolism behind the sculptures to show that the whole tableau was created to be a *prashasti*, or something to praise the Pallava king, who, they say, would have sat enthroned in the tank in front of this extraordinary backdrop.

A temple has been given prominence in the relief. Ascetics and worshippers sit before it. Above it is an emaciated bearded figure standing in penance on one leg, his arms raised above his head. He has been identified by some as Bhagirath and by others as Arjuna. Arjuna's penance was to obtain the *pashupata* weapon from Shiva, whereas Bhagirath prayed to have Ganga brought to earth. Next to this figure stands Shiva who has one hand in the boon bestowing gesture or *varada mudra*. The small *gana* or dwarf who stands below this hand may be a personification of the powerful *pashupata* weapon.

All the figures are shown with a slender and linear quality in an animated state of movement. Apart from humans and flying celestials there are several naturalistically carved birds and animals as well. Particularly noteworthy are the extraordinarily well-modelled, and life-like elephants, and the pair of deer who are under the shrine. The most humorous, however, is a cat who has been shown standing on his hind legs, with his hands raised, imitating Bhagirath or Arjuna. Close examination, however, reveals that this cat is, in fact, a symbolic device. He is surrounded by rats, which are unable to disturb him from his penance. Perhaps this is a metaphor used by the artist to show how strong Arjuna's or Bhagirath's penance was, who is also standing still, undisturbed by his surroundings.

RAVANA SHAKING MOUNT KAILASHA



The theme of Ravana shaking Mount Kailasha has been depicted several times in the caves of Ellora. But the most noteworthy of all is the one depicted on the left wall of Kailashnath temple (Cave No.16) at Ellora. The image is dated to the eighth century CE. It is a colossal sculpture and is considered as one of the masterpieces of Indian sculpture. It depicts the episode of Ravana shaking Mount Kailasha when Lord Shiva along with Parvati and others were on the mountain. The composition is divided into several tiers. The lower tier depicts Ravana, multi-faced and multi-armed shaking the mount with ease. The depth of carvings of the multiple hands brings out the effect of three-dimensional space. Ravana's body is angular pushing one leg inside. The hands are expanded on the sides of the inside chamber created by the image of Ravana. The upper half is divided into three frames. The centre occupied by the image of Shiva and Parvati. Parvati is shown moving close to Shiva scared by the commotion on the hill. Her stretched legs and slightly twisted body in the recessed space create a very dramatic effect of light and shade. The volume of sculpture is very pronounced; the attendant fiures are equally voluminous. The *gana* (dwarf) figures are shown in action, involved in their activities. The celestial beings above Shiva and Parvati witnessing the event are shown in frozen movement. Protrusion of volume and recession in the space are important landmarks in the images of the Ellora caves. Light and darkness has been exploited by creating the images in full round. Their torsos are slender with heaviness in its surface treatment, arms are slim in full round. Attendant figures on the two sides have angular frontality. Every image in the composition is beautifully interwoven structurally with each other.

Carvings on outer wall, Kailashnath temple, Ellora

LAKSHMANA TEMPLE IN KHAJURAHO

Reprint 2026-27

The temples at Khajuraho are all made of sandstone. They were patronised by the Chandella dynasty. The Lakshmana temple represents the full-fledged, developed style of temple architecture during the time of the Chandellas. Its construction was completed by 954, the year as per the inscription found at the base of the temple, by Yashovarman, the seventh ruler of the Chandella dynasty. The temple plan is of a panchayana type. The temple is constructed on a heavy plinth. It consists of an *ardhamandapa* (porch), *mandapa* (porch), the *maha mandapa* (greater hall) and the *garbhagriha* with *vimana*. Each part has a separate roof rising backward. All the halls have projected porches on their walls but are not accessible to visitors. Their use is functional, mainly for light and ventilation. The outer walls of the *garbhagriha* and the outer and inner walls around the circumambulatory path are decorated with sculptures. The *shikhara* on the *garbhagriha* is tall. The Khajuraho temples are also known for their erotic sculptures. Many erotic sculptures are carved on the plinth wall. Some erotic sculptures are carved on the actual wall of the temple. Tier arrangements on the walls provide a very specific space for the placement of the images. The interior halls are also decorated profusely. The entrance to the *garbhagriha* is sculpted with heavy voluminous pillars and lintels carved with small images as part of the door decoration. An image of Chaturmukha Vishnu is in the *garbhagriha*. There are four shrines in each corner of the temple. There are images of Vishnu in three shrines and Surya in one, which can be identified by the central image on the lintel of the shrine-doors. Drapery and ornaments are given a lot of attention.

A large number of bronze scupltures have been found in the country which shall be discussed in the next chapter.

We have focussed on the dominant art styles and some of the most famous monuments from different parts of India in the medieval period. It is important to realise that the enormous artistic achievements that we have studied here would never have been possible if artists worked alone. These large projects would have brought architects, builders, sculptors and painters together.

Above all, by studying these artworks, we are able to learn much about the kind of society that made these objects. Through them we can surmise what their buildings were like, what types of clothes they wore and above all we can use the art material to reconstruct the history of their religions. These religions, as we have seen were many and diverse and constantly changing. Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism each have a plethora of gods and goddesses, and this was the period when *bhakti* and *tantra* — two major developments, affected them. Temples also became a space for many other art forms, such as music and dance and, from the tenth century onwards, temples became large landowners as kings and feudal lords gave them land for their maintenance once and upkeep, and performed an administrative role as well.

Project Work

Find any temple or monastery in or around your town and note down its important features such as different artchitectural features, sculptural style, identification of images, dynastic affiliation and patronage.

© NCERT not to be republished

EXERCISE

1. Mark out all the places discussed in this chapter on a map of India.
2. What are the commonalities and differences between North Indian and South Indian temples? Make a diagram to supplement your answer.
3. Bring out the stylistic differences of any two sculptural traditions (such as Pala, Chola, Pallava, Chandella, etc.) using either drawing, painting or clay-modelling. Supplement your project with a written assignment that explains the salient features of the two styles you have chosen.
4. Compare any two temple styles in India; supplement with a line drawing.
5. Trace the development in Buddhist art.

Reprint 2026-27

11144CH07

7 INDIAN BRONZE SCULPTURE

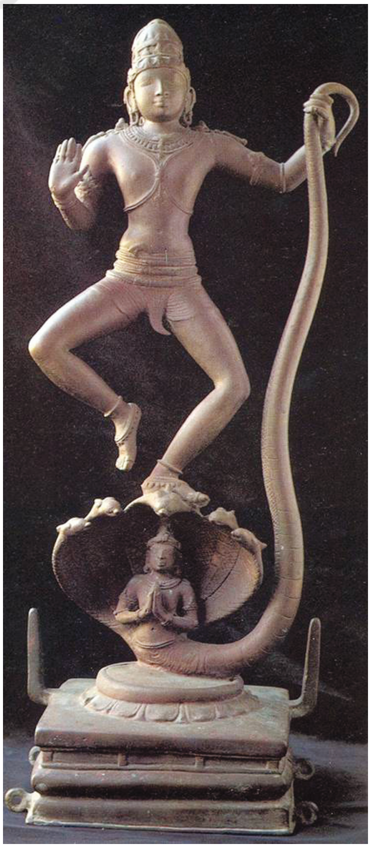
INDIAN sculptors had mastered the bronze medium and the casting process as much as they had mastered terracotta sculpture and carving in stone. The *cire-perdu* or 'lost-wax' process for casting was learnt as long ago as the Indus Valley Culture. Along with it was discovered the process of making alloy of metals by mixing copper, zinc and tin which is called bronze.

Bronze sculptures and statuettes of Buddhist, Hindu and Jain icons have been discovered from many regions of India dating from the second century until the sixteenth century. Most of these were used for ritual worship and are characterised by exquisite beauty and aesthetic appeal. At the same time the metal-casting process continued to be utilised for making articles for various purposes of daily use, such as utensils for cooking, eating, drinking, etc. Present-day tribal communities also utilise the 'lost-wax' process for their art expressions.

Perhaps the 'Dancing Girl' from Mohenjodaro is the earliest bronze sculpture datable to 2500 BCE. The limbs and torso of this female figurine are simplified in tubular form. A similar group of bronze statuettes have been discovered from archaeological excavation at Daimabad (Maharashtra) datable to 1500 BCE. Significant is the 'Chariot', the wheels of which are represented in simple circular shapes while the driver or human rider has been elongated, and the bulls in the forefront are modelled in sturdy forms.

Interesting images of Jain *tirthankaras* have been discovered from Chausa, Bihar, belonging to the Kushana Period during second century CE. These bronzes show how the Indian sculptors had mastered the modelling of masculine human physique and simplified muscles. Remarkable is the depiction of Adinath or Vrishabhnath, who is identified with long hairlocks dropping to his shoulders. Otherwise the *tirthankaras* are noted by their short curly hair.

Gujarat and Rajasthan have been strongholds of Jainism since early times. A famous hoard of Jain bronzes was found at Akota, on the outskirts of Baroda, dated between



Kaliyadaman, Chola bronze, Tamil Nadu

© NCERT not to be republished

the end of the fifth and the end of the seventh century CE. Finely cast through the lost-wax process, these bronzes were often subsequently inlaid with silver and copper to bring out the eyes, crowns and details of the textiles on which the figures were seated. Many famous Jain bronzes from Chausa in Bihar are now kept in the Patna Museum. Many Jain bronzes from Hansi in Haryana and from various sites in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are kept in various museums in India.

The hoard of bronzes discovered in Akota near Vadodara established that bronze casting was practised in Gujarat or western India between the sixth and ninth centuries. Most of the images represent the Jain *tirthankaras* like Mahavira, Parshvanath or Adinath. A new format was invented in which *tirthankaras* are seated on a throne; they can be single or combined in a group of three or in a group of twenty-four *tirthankaras*. Female images were also cast representing *yakshinis* or *Shasanadevis* of some prominent *tirthankaras*. Stylistically, they were influenced by the features of both the Gupta and the Vakataka period bronzes. Chakreshvari is the *Shasanadevi* of Adinath and Ambika is of Neminath.

Many standing Buddha images with right hand in *abhaya mudra* were cast in North India, particularly Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, during the Gupta and Post-Gupta periods, i.e., between the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries. The *sanghati* or the monk's robe is wrapped to cover the shoulders which turns over the right arm, while the other

Shiva Family, tenth century CE, Bihar

Ganesh, seventh century CE, Kashmir

© NCERT not to be republished

end of the drapery is wrapped over the left arm. Eventually the pleats are held by the extended hand of the same arm. The drapery falls and spreads into a wide curve at the level of the ankles. The Buddha's figure is modelled in a subtle manner suggesting, at the same time, the thin quality of the cloth. The whole figure is treated with refinement; there is a certain delicacy in the treatment of the torso. The figure appears youthful and proportionate in comparison with the Kushana style. In the typical bronze from Dhanesar Khera, Uttar Pradesh, the folds of the drapery are treated as in the Mathura style, i.e., in a series of drooping down curves. Sarnath-style bronzes have foldless drapery. The outstanding example is that of the Buddha image at Sultanganj, Bihar, which is quite a monumental bronze figure. The typical refined style of these bronzes is the hallmark of the classical quality.

Vakataka bronze images of the Buddha from Phophnar, Maharashtra, are contemporary with the Gupta period bronzes. They show the influence of the Amaravati style of

Devi, Chola bronze, Tamil Nadu

The Lost-wax Process

The lost-wax process is a technique used for making objects of metal, especially in Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. In each region, a slightly different technique is used.

The lost-wax process involves several different steps. First a wax model of the image is made by hand of pure beeswax that has first been melted over an open fire, and then strained through a fine cloth into a basin of cold water. Here it resolidifies immediately. It is then pressed through a *pichki* or *pharni* — which squeezes the wax into noodle-like shape. These wax wires are then wound around to the shape of the entire image.

The image is now covered with a thick coating of paste, made of equal parts of clay, sand and cow-dung. Into an opening on one side, a clay pot is fixed. In this molten metal is poured. The weight of the metal to be used is ten times that of wax. (The wax is weighed before starting the entire process.) This metal is largely scrap metal from broken pots and pans. While the molten metal is poured in the clay pot, the clay-plastered model is exposed to firing. As the wax inside melts, the metal flows down the channel and takes on the shape of the wax image. The firing process is carried out almost like a religious ritual and all the steps take place in dead silence. The image is later chiselled with files to smoothen it and give it a finish. Casting a bronze image is a painstaking task and demands a high degree of skill. Sometimes an alloy of five metals — gold, silver, copper, brass and lead — is used to cast bronze images.

© NCERT not to be republished

Ganesh, Kashmir, seventh century CE

Andhra Pradesh in the third century CE and at the same time there is a significant change in the draping style of the monk's robe. Buddha's right hand in *abhaya mudra* is free so that the drapery clings to the right side of the body contour. The result is a continuous flowing line on this side of the figure. At the level of the ankles of the Buddha figure the drapery makes a conspicuous curvilinear turn, as it is held by the left hand.

The additional importance of the Gupta and Vakataka bronzes is that they were portable and monks carried them from place to place for the purpose of individual worship or to be installed in Buddhist *viharas*. In this manner the refined classical style spread to different parts of India and to Asian countries overseas.

Himachal Pradesh and Kashmir regions also produced bronze images of Buddhist deities as well as Hindu gods and goddesses. Most of these were created during the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries and have a very distinct style in comparison with bronzes from other parts of India. A noteworthy development is the growth of different types of iconography of Vishnu images. Four-headed Vishnu, also known as *Chaturanana* or *Vaikuntha Vishnu*, was worshipped in these regions. While the central face represents Vasudeva,

Bronze sculpture, Himachal Pradesh

© NCERT not to be republished

the other two faces are that of Narasimha and Varaha. The Narasimha *avatar* and Mahishasuramardini Durga images of Himachal Pradesh are among the very dynamic bronzes from that region.

In Buddhist centres like Nalanda, a school of bronze-casting emerged around the ninth century during the rule of the Pala Dynasty in Bihar and Bengal regions. In the gap of a few centuries the sculptors at Kurkihar near Nalanda were able to revive the classical style of the Gupta period. A remarkable bronze is of a four-armed Avalokitesvara, which is a good example of a male figure in graceful *tribhanga* posture. Worship of female goddesses was adopted which is part of the growth of the Vajrayana phase in Buddhism. Images of Tara became very popular. Seated on a throne, she is accompanied by a growing curvilinear lotus stalk and her right hand is in the *abhaya mudra*.

Nataraja, Chola period, twelfth century CE

The bronze casting technique and making of bronze images of traditional icons reached a high stage of development in South India during the medieval period. Although bronze images were modelled and cast during the Pallava Period in the eighth and ninth centuries, some of the most beautiful and exquisite statues were produced during the Chola Period in Tamil Nadu from the tenth to the twelfth century. The technique and art of fashioning bronze images is still skillfully practised in South India, particularly in Kumbakonam. The distinguished patron

Nataraja

Shiva is associated with the end of the cosmic world with which this dancing position is associated.

In this Chola period bronze sculpture he has been shown balancing himself on his right leg and suppressing the *apasmara*, the demon of ignorance or forgetfulness, with the foot of the same leg. At the same time he raises his left leg in *bhujangatrasita* stance, which represents *tirobhava*, that is kicking away the veil of *maya* or illusion from the devotee's mind. His four arms are outstretched and the main right hand is posed in *abhaya hasta* or the gesture suggesting. The upper right holds the *damaru* his favourite musical instrument to keep on the beat *tala*. The upper left hand carries a flame while the main left hand is held in *dola hasta* and connects with the *abhaya hasta* of the right hand. His hair locks fly on both the sides touching the circular *jvala mala* or the garland of flames which surrounds the entire dancing figuration.

© NCERT not to be republished

during the tenth century was the widowed Chola queen, Sembiyan Maha Devi. Chola bronzes are the most sought-after collectors' items by art lovers all over the world.

Among the Pallava Period bronzes of the eighth century is the icon of Shiva seated in *ardhaparyanka asana* (one leg kept dangling). The right hand is in the *achamana mudra* gesture, suggesting that he is about to drink poison.

The well-known dancing figure of Shiva as Nataraja was evolved and fully developed during the Chola Period and since then many variations of this complex bronze image have been modelled.

A wide range of Shiva iconography was evolved in the Thanjavur (Tanjore) region of Tamil Nadu. The ninth century *kalyanasundara murti* is highly remarkable for the manner in which *Panigrahana* (ceremony of marriage) is represented by two separate statuettes. Shiva with his extended right hand accepts Parvati's (the bride's) right hand, who is depicted with a bashful expression and taking a step forward. The union of Shiva and Parvati is very ingeniously represented in the *ardhanarisvara murti* in a single image. Beautiful independent figurines of Parvati have also been modelled, standing in graceful *tribhanga* posture.

During the sixteenth century, known as the Vijayanagar Period in Andhra Pradesh, the sculptors experimented with portrait sculpture in order to preserve knowledge of the royal patron for posterity. At Tirupati, life-size standing portrait statues were cast in bronze, depicting Krishnadevaraya with his two queens, Tirumalamba and Chinnadevi. The sculptor has combined the likeness of the facial features with certain elements of idealisation. The idealisation is further observed in the manner the physical body is modelled to appear imposing as well as graceful. The standing king and queens are depicted in praying posture, that is, both hands held in the *namaskara mudra*.

EXERCISE

1. Do you think that the technique of bronze casting has been a continuous process? How did it evolve over a period of time?
2. In India sculpturing in stone and metal happened simultaneously. In your opinion what were the similarities and differences between both technically, stylistically and functionally?
3. Why are Chola bronze sculptures considered as the most refined?
4. Search for visuals of bronze sculptures of the Buddha belonging to periods other than the Chola Period from Himachal Pradesh, Kashmir, etc.

© NCERT not to be republished

11144CH08

8

Some Aspects of Indo-Islamic Architecture

In the seventh and eighth centuries CE, Islam spread towards Spain and India. Islam came to India, particularly, with Muslim merchants, traders, holy men and conquerors over a passage of six hundred years. Although by the eighth century CE, Muslims had begun to construct in Sind, Gujarat, etc., it was only in the early thirteenth century that large-scale building activity begun under the Delhi Sultanate, established after the Turkish conquest of northern India.

By the twelfth century, India was already familiar with monumental constructions in grandiose settings. Certain techniques and embellishments were prevalent and popular, such as trabeation (brackets, pillars and lintels) to support a flat roof or a small shallow dome. While arches were shaped in wood and stone, these were unable to bear the weight of the top structure. Now, however, the archuate form of construction was introduced gradually in which arches could support the weight of the domes. Such arches needed to be constructed with *voussoirs* (series of interlocking blocks) and fitted with keystones. The domes, resting on pendatives and squinches enabled spanning of large spaces leaving the interiors free of pillars.

A noteworthy aspect of these migrations and conquests was that Muslims absorbed many features of local cultures and traditions and combined them with their own architectural practices. Thus, in the field of architecture, a mix of many structural techniques, stylised shapes, and surface decorations came about through constant interventions of acceptance, rejection or modification of architectural elements. These architectural entities or categories showcasing multiple styles are known as Indo-Saracenic or Indo-Islamic architecture.

Hindus conceived manifestations of god everywhere in multiple forms as part of their religious faith, whereas, Muslims thought of only one with Muhammad as their Prophet. Hence, Hindus adorned all surfaces with sculptures and paintings. Muslims, forbidden to replicate living forms on any surface, developed their religious art and architecture consisting of the arts of arabesque, geometrical patterns and calligraphy on plaster and stone.

Qutub Minar, Delhi

© NCERT not to be republished

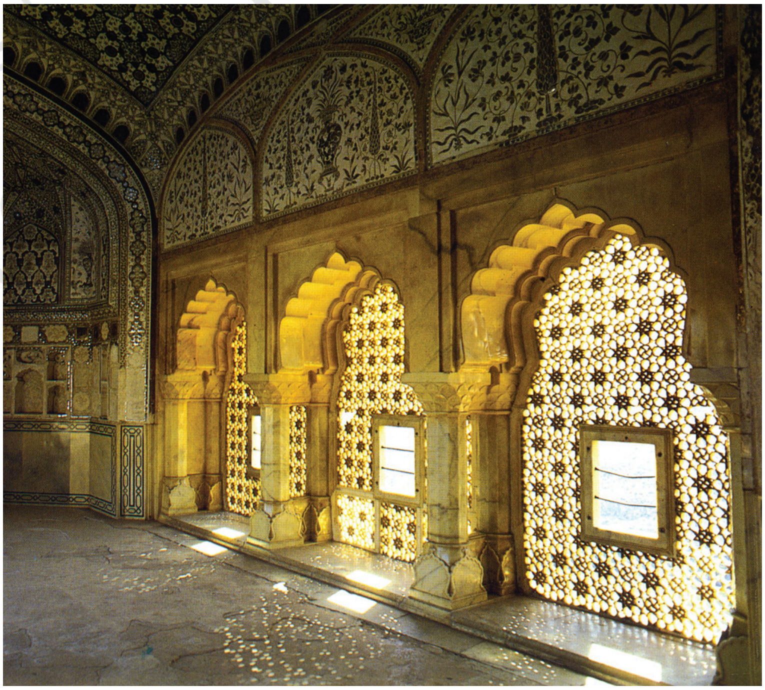
TYPOLOGIES OF STRUCTURES

Keeping in mind religious and secular necessities, architectural building like mosques for daily prayers, the Jama Masjids, tombs, *dargahs, minars, hammams*, formally laid out gardens, madrasas, *sarais* or caravansarais, *Kos minars*, etc., were constructed over a period of time. These were thus additions in the existing types of buildings in the sub-continent.

Architectural edifices in the Indian sub-continent, as elsewhere in the world, were constructed by wealthy people. They were, in descending order, rulers and nobles and their families, merchants, merchant guilds, rural elite and devotees of a cult. In spite of the obvious Saracenic, Persian and Turkish influences, Indo-Islamic structures were heavily influenced by prevailing sensibilities of Indian architectural and decorative forms. A lot depended on the availability of materials, limitations of resources and skills and the sense of aesthetics of the patrons. Although religion and religiosity were very important to people of medieval India, as elsewhere, they borrowed architectural elements liberally.

CATEGORIES OF STYLES

The study of Indo-Islamic architecture is conventionally categorised into the Imperial Style (Delhi Sultanate), the Provincial Style (Mandu, Gujarat, Bengal, and Jaunpur), the Mughal Style (Delhi, Agra, and Lahore) and the Deccani Style (Bijapur, Golconda). These categories help in understanding better the specificities of architectural styles rather than putting them in immutable slots.



Intricate jali work, Amer Fort, Jaipur

© NCERT not to be republished

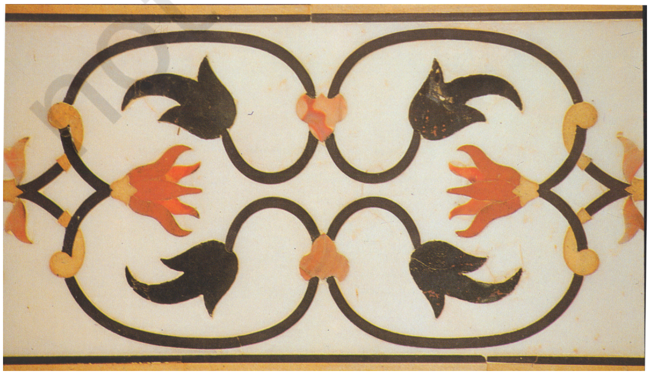
ARCHITECTURAL INFLUENCES

Amongst provincial styles, the architecture of Bengal and Jaunpur is regarded as distinct. Gujarat was said to have a markedly regional character for patrons borrowed elements from regional temple traditions such as *toranas*, lintels in *mihrabs*, carvings of bell and chain motifs, and carved panels depicting trees, for tombs, mosques and *dargahs*. The fifteenth century white marble *dargah* of Shaikh Ahmad Khattu of Sarkhej is a good example of provincial style and it heavily influenced the form and decoration of Mughal tombs.

DECORATIVE FORMS

These forms included designing on plaster through incision or stucco. The designs were either left plain or covered with colours. Motifs were also painted on or carved in stone. These motifs included varieties of flowers, both from the sub-continent and places outside, particularly Iran. The lotus bud fringe was used to great advantage in the inner curves of the arches. Walls were also decorated with cypress, *chinar* and other trees as also with flower vases. Many complex designs of flower motifs decorating the ceilings were also to be found on textiles and carpets. In the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries tiles were also used to surface the walls and the domes. Popular colours were blue, turquoise, green and yellow. Subsequently the techniques of tessellation (mosaic designs) and *pietra dura* were made use of for surface decoration particularly in the dado panels of the walls. At times *lapis lazuli* was used in the interior walls or on canopies. Other decorations included arabesque, calligraphy and high and low relief carving and a profuse use of *jalis*. The high relief carving has a three- dimensional look. The arches were plain and squat and sometimes high and pointed. From the sixteenth century onwards arches were designed with trefoil or multiple foliations. Spandrels of the arches were decorated with medallions or bosses. The roof was a mix of the central dome and other smaller domes, *chatris* and tiny minarets. The central dome was topped with an inverted lotus flower motif and a metal or stone pinnacle.

Dado panel on the wall, Agra



Pietra dura work, Agra

© NCERT not to be republished

MATERIALS FOR CONSTRUCTION

The walls in all buildings were extremely thick and were largely constructed of rubble masonary, which was easily available. These walls were then cased over with *chunam* or limestone plaster or dressed stone. An amazing range of stones were utilised for construction such as quartzite, sandstone, buff, marble, etc. Polychrome tiles were used to great advantage to finish the walls. From the beginning of the seventeenth century, bricks were also used for construction and these imparted greater flexibility to the structures. In this phase there was more reliance on local materials.

FORTS

Building monumental forts with embattlements was a regular feature in medieval times, often symbolising the seat of power of a king. When such a fort was captured by an attacking army the vanquished ruler either lost his complete power or his sovereignty. This was because he had to accept the suzerainty of the victorious king. Some examples of strong, complex edifices which still exercise the imagination of the visitor are the forts of Chittor, Gwalior, Daulatabad, earlier known as Devgiri and Golconda.

Commanding heights were utilised to great advantage to construct forts. These heights gave a good perspective of the region, strategic advantage for security, unfettered and unhindered space to make residential and official complexes while simultaneously creating a sense of awe in the people. Other complexities woven into such topography were concentric circles

Daulatabad Fort

© NCERT not to be republished

Gwalior Fort

of outer walls as in Golconda, so that the enemy had to breach these at all stages before getting in.

Daulatabad had several strategic devices to confound the enemy, such as staggered entrances so that gates could not be opened even with the help of elephants. It also had twin forts, one within the other but at a higher elevation and accessed by a complex defence design arrangement. One wrong turn in the labyrinth or complex pathway could lead to the enemy soldier going in circles or falling to his death several hundred feet below.

The Gwalior Fort was invincible because its steep height made it impossible to scale. It had many habitations and usages. Babur, who did not find much merit in many things he saw in Hindustan, was said to have been overawed at the sight of the Gwalior Fort. Chittorgarh bears the distinction of being the largest fort in Asia and was occupied for the longest length of time as the seat of power. It has many types of buildings including *stambhas* or towers to signify victory and bravery. It was replete with numerous water bodies. Innumerable acts of heroism have been associated with the principal people in the fort, forming the substance of many a legend. An interesting aspect associated with forts is that within the palace complexes stylistic and decorative influences were absorbed most liberally.

MINARS

Another form of *stambha* or tower was the *minar*, a common feature in the sub-continent. Two most striking minars of medieval times are the Qutub Minar in Delhi and the Chand Minar at Daulatabad

© NCERT not to be republished

Chand Minar, Daulatabad

Fort. The everyday use of the *minar* was for the *azaan* or call to prayer. Its phenomenal height, however, symbolised the might and power of the ruler. The Qutub Minar also came to be associated with the much revered saint of Delhi, Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki.

The Qutub Minar, built in the thirteenth century, is a 234-feet-high tapering tower divided into five storeys. The *minar* is a mix of polygonal and circular shapes. It is largely built of red and buff sandstone with some use of marble in the upper storeys. It is characterised by highly decorated balconies and bands of inscriptions intertwined with foliated designs.

Chand Minar, built in the fifteenth century, is a 210- feet-high tapering tower divided into four storeys. Painted peach now, its façade once boasted of chevron patterning on the encaustic tile work and bold bands of Quranic verses. Although it looked like an Iranian monument, it was the combined handiwork of local architects with those from Delhi and Iran.

TOMBS

Monumental structures over graves of rulers and royalty was a popular feature of medieval India. Some well-known examples of such tombs are those of Ghyasuddin Tughlaq, Humayun, Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan in Delhi, Akbar and Itmaduddaula in Agra. According to Anthony Welch, the idea behind the tomb was eternal paradise as a reward for the true believer on the Day of Judgement. This led to the paradisiacal imagery for tomb

Tomb of Itmaduddaula, Agra

© NCERT not to be republished

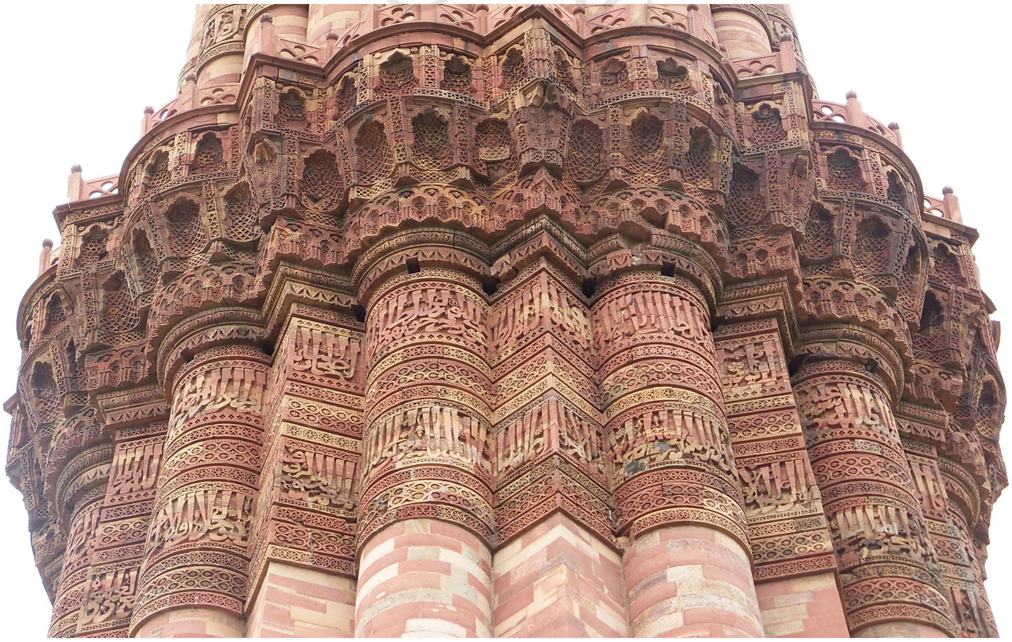
construction. Beginning with the introduction of Quranic verses on the walls, the tomb was, subsequently, placed within paradisiacal elements such as a garden or near a body of water or both, as is in the case of the Humayun's tomb and the Taj Mahal, which follows the *charbagh* style. Surely though, such vast expanses of structured and stylised spaces could not have been intended only to signify peace and happiness in the next world but to also showcase the majesty, grandeur and might of the person buried there.

Sarais

A hugely interesting feature of medieval India was the *sarais* which ringed cities and dotted the vast space of the Indian sub-continent. *Sarais* were largely built on a simple square or rectangular plan and were meant to provide temporary accommodation to Indian and foreign travellers, pilgrims, merchants, traders, etc. In effect, *sarais* were public domains which thronged with people of varied cultural backgrounds. This led to cross-cultural interaction, influences and syncretic tendencies in the cultural mores of the times and at the level of the people.

Structures for Common People

One of the architectural features of medieval India was also a coming together of styles, techniques and decorations in public and private spaces of non-royal sections of the society. These included buildings for domestic usage, temples, mosques, *khanqahs* (hermitage of Sufi saints) and *dargahs*, commemorative gateways, pavilions in buildings and gardens, bazaars, etc.



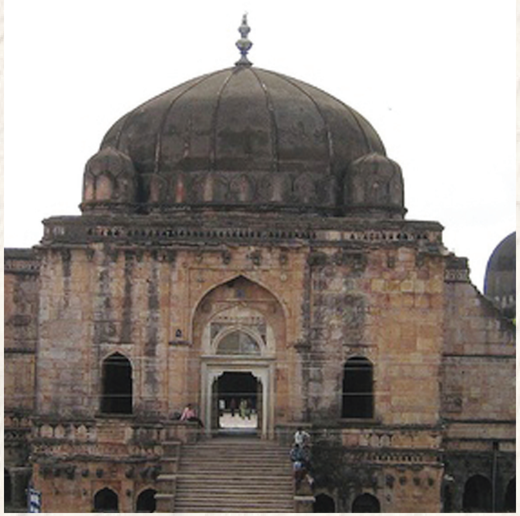
© NCERT not to be republished

MANDU

© not to be republished

The city of Mandu is located sixty miles from Indore, at an elevation of over 2000 feet and overlooks the Malwa Plateau to the north and the Narmada valley to the south. Mandu's natural defence encouraged consistent habitations by Parmara Rajputs, Afghans and Mughals. As the capital city of Ghauri Dynasty (1401–1561) founded by Hoshang Shah it acquired a lot of fame. Subsequently, Mandu was associated with the romance of Sultan Baz Bahadur and Rani Rupmati. The Mughals resorted to it for pleasure during the monsoon season.

Mandu is a typical respresentation of the medieval provincial style of art and architecture. It was a complex mix of official and residential-cum-pleasure palace, pavilions, mosques, artificial reservoirs, *baolis*, embattlements, etc. In spite of the size or monumentality, the structures were very close to nature, designed in the style of arched pavilions, light and airy, so that these buildings did not retain heat. Local stone and marble were used to great advantage. Mandu is a fine example of architectural adaptation to the environment.



Hoshang Shah's tomb

The Royal Enclave located in the city comprised the most complete and romantic set of buildings, a cluster of palaces and attendant structures, official and residential, built around two artificial lakes. The Hindola Mahal looks like a railway viaduct bridge with its disproportionately large buttresses supporting the walls. This was the audience hall of the Sultan and also the place where he showed himself to his subjects. Batter was used very effectively to give an impression of swinging (*Hindola*) walls.

Jahaaz Mahal is an elegant two-storey 'ship-palace' between two reservoirs, with open pavilions, balconies overhanging the water and a terrace. Built by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Khilji it was possibly used as his harem and as the ultimate pleasure and recreational resort. It had a complex

Hindola Mahal

Jahaaz Mahal , Mandu

arrangement of watercourses and a terrace swimming pool.

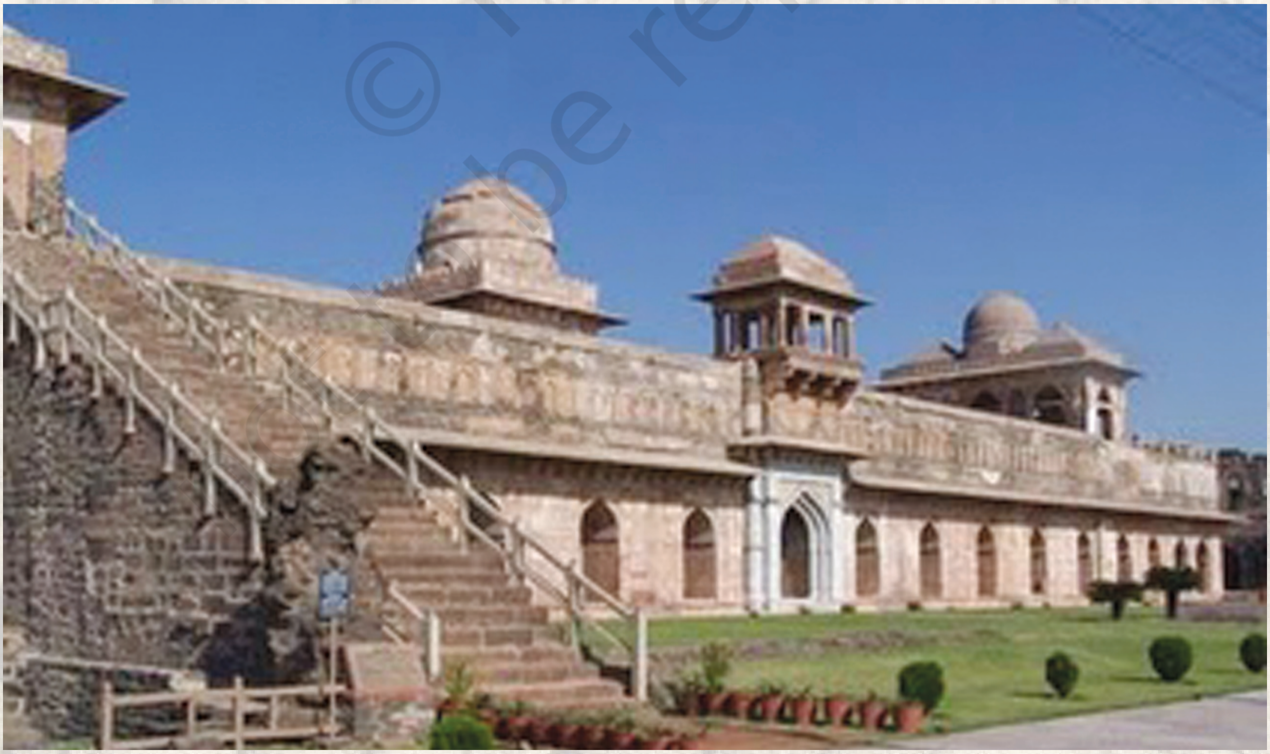
Rani Rupmati's double pavilion perched on the southern embattlements afforded a beautiful view of the Narmada valley. Baz Bahadur's palace had a wide courtyard ringed with halls and terraces.

A *madrasa* called Asharfi Mahal now lies in ruins. Hoshang Shah's tomb is a majestic structure with a beautiful dome, marble *jali* work, porticos, courts and towers. It is regarded as an example of the robustness of Afghan structures, but its lattice work, carved brackets and *toranas* lend it a softer hue.

The *Jama Masjid* of Mandu was built on a large scale to accommodate many worshippers for Friday prayers. It is entered through a monumental gateway, topped with a squat dome, beyond which lies an open courtyard flanked with columned cloisters on three sides, also topped with smaller domes. The building is faced with red sandstone. The *mimbar* in the *Qibla Liwan* is supported on carved brackets and the *mihrab* has a lotus bud fringe.

Provincial style architecture of Mandu is regarded as too close to the structures of Imperial Delhi to make a bold statement of local traditions. Nevertheless, the so-called robust, austere Pathan architecture of Mandu with its surface embellishments of *jalis*, carved brackets, etc., and the lightness of the structures was an important intervention in the narrative of the Indo-Islamic architectural experience.

Jama Masjid, Mandu



© NCERT not to be republished

Taj Mahal

From 1632 onwards it took nearly twenty years and 20,000 specialised workers to complete this monument.

Taj Mahal was built in Agra by Shah Jahan as a mausoleum for his deceased wife Mumtaz Mahal. Taj Mahal was the apogee of the evolutionary architectural process in medieval India.

The sublimity of the building comes from its orderly, simple plan and elevation, amazingly perfect proportions or symmetry, the ethereal quality marble has lent to it, the perfect setting of *bagh* and river and the pure outline of the tomb silhouetted against the sky. The patina the Taj has lends it a different hue at various times of day and night.

The Taj complex is entered through a monumental red sandstone gateway the opening arch of which beautifully frames the mausoleum. The tomb is laid out in a Chahar Bagh, criss-crossed with paths and water courses, interspersed with pools and fountains. The structure is placed on the northern extremity of the *bagh* instead of the middle to take advantage of the river bank.

A straight path through the *bagh* reaches the plinth of the tomb from where is accessed the floor terrace of the edifice. At the corners of the terrace stand four tall, tapering minarets, one hundred and thirty-two feet high. The main body of the building is topped with a drum and dome and four cupolas forming a beautiful skyline. The plinth, the walls of the structure and the drum-dome are in perfect proportion to one another. Towards the west of the white marble-faced tomb lies a red sandstone mosque and a similar construction in the east to maintain balance. Marble for the building was quarried from the Makrana mines in Rajasthan and this white edifice is contrasted with the red sandstone of the surrounding structures.

The tomb structure is a square with chamfers forming eight sides, recessed with deep arches. This structural stylisation produces in the elevation of the building a variety of contrasting planes and shade and solids and voids effects. All sides of the building, the twin elevations of floor to roof and roof to pinnacle, atop the foliated crest of the dome, measure 186 feet each.

The interior arrangements of the mausoleum consist of a crypt below and a vaulted, octagonal tomb chamber above, with a room at each angle, all connected with corridors. Light to every part of the building is obtained by means of carved and perforated *jalis*, set in the arched recesses of the interior. The ceiling is as high as the façade creating a void with the help of a double dome.

Four types of embellishments have been used with great effect for the interior and exterior surfaces of the Taj Mahal. These are stone carvings in high and low relief on the walls, the delicate carving of marble into *jalis* and graceful volutes (spiral ornament on the pillar), and the creation of arabesques with pietra dura (yellow marble, jade and jasper) on walls and tombstones and geometric designs with tessellation. Lastly, the art of calligraphy is used with the inlay of jasper in white marble to write Quranic verses. Calligraphy provided a decorative element on the walls and a continuous connection with the Almighty.

Reprint 2026-27

GOL GUMBAD

Gumbad is situated in Bijapur in the Bijapur District of Karnataka. It is the mausoleum of Muhammad Adil Shah (1626–1656), the seventh Sultan of the Adil Shahi Dynasty of Bijapur (1489–1686). Built by the ruler himself, it is a striking edifice in spite of being unfinished. The tomb is a complex of buildings such as a gateway, a *Naqqar Khana*, a mosque and a *sarai* located within a large-walled garden.

Drum of the Dome

The Gumbad is a monumental square building topped with a circular drum over which rests a majestic dome, giving the building its nomenclature. It is built of dark gray basalt and decorated plasterwork. Each wall of the tomb is one hundred and thirty-five feet long and one hundred and ten feet high and ten feet thick. With the drum and the dome, the building rises to a height of over two hundred feet. The tomb has only one square chamber and the dome, with a diameter of one hundred and twenty-five feet, it covers an uninterrupted floor space of 18,337 square feet, the second largest in the world.

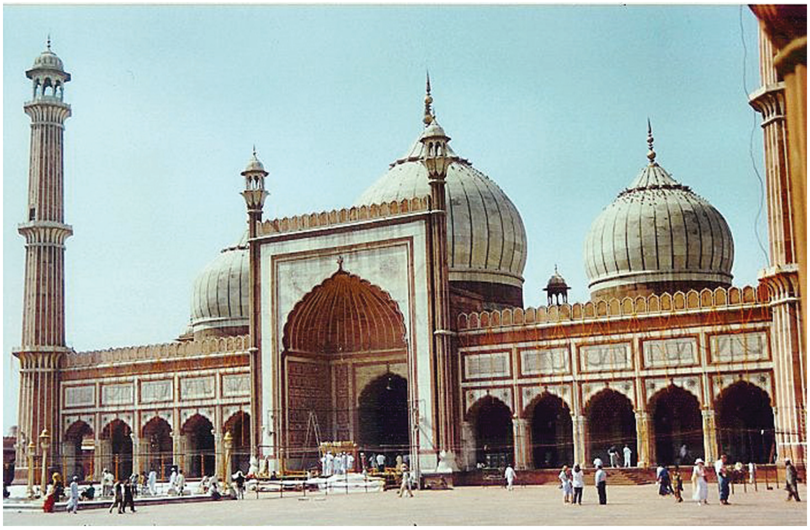
The tomb chamber contains the burial place of the Sultan, his wives and other relatives, while their real graves lie perpendicularly below in a vault, accessed by stairs. The hemispherical masonry dome over a square base was constructed with the help of pendentives. These pendentives not only lent shape to the dome but also transferred its weight to the walls below. New vaulting systems consisting of arch-nets or stellate forms in squinches were created to cover angles formed by intersecting arches.

The building has an amazing acoustical system. Along the drum of the dome there is a whispering gallery where sounds get magnified and echoed many times over.

Whisper Gallery

At the four corners of the building are seven-storeyed octagonal spires or minaret-like towers. These towers house staircases leading to the top dome. The drum of the dome is decorated with foliation. A heavily bracketed cornice resting on corbels is a distinctive feature of the facade.

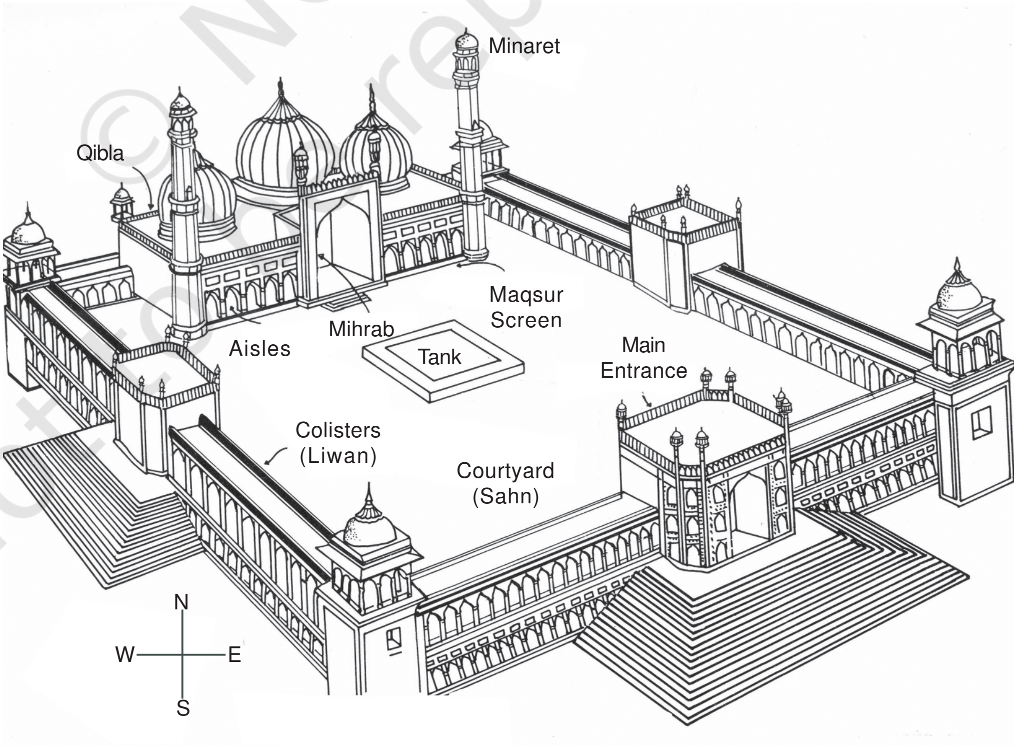
Gol Gumbad is a fine convergence of many styles located in medieval India. Monumentality, majesty and grandeur, integral aspects of the architectural experience in India, are associated with buildings of Bijapur. While its structural particularities of dome, arches, geometric proportions and load bearing techniques suggest Timurid and Persian styles, it is made of local material and is decorated with surface embellishments popular in the Deccan. Four towers at the corners are reminiscent of turrets attached to mosques such as Qila-i Kuhna Masjid and the Purana Qila in Delhi.



Jama Masjid, Delhi

JAMA MASJID

Large mosques, spanning huge spaces, also dotted the landscape of the Indian sub-continent in medieval times. Congregational prayers were held here every Friday afternoon which required the presence of a minimum of forty Muslim male adults. At the time of prayers (on Fridays) a *Khutba* was read out in the name of the ruler and his laws for the realm were also read out. In medieval times, a city had one Jama Masjid, which along with its immediate surroundings became the focus of the lives of the people, both Muslim and non-Muslim. This happened because a lot of commercial and cultural exchanges were concentrated here besides religious and indirect political activity. Generally, such a mosque was large with an open courtyard, surrounded on three sides by cloisters and the *Qibla Liwan* in the west. It was here that the *mihrab* and the *mimbar* for the *Imam* were located. People faced the *mihrab* while offering prayers as it indicated the direction of the *Kaaba* in Mecca.



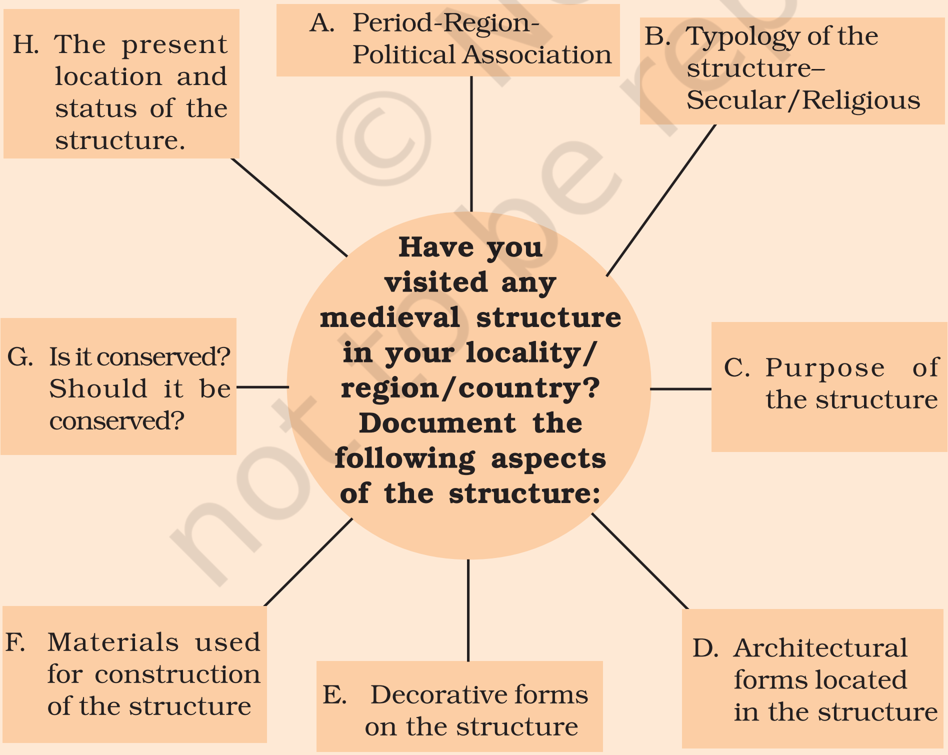
Plan of Jama Masjid

© NCERT not to be republished

EXERCISE

1. What do you understand by the term 'Indo-Islamic' or 'Indo-Saracenic' architecture? Can you think of another nomenclature? How did this architecture evolve in India?
2. What types of buildings were added in India in the thirteenth century?
3. Name four styles of Indo-Islamic architecture.
4. What was the significance of a fort in medieval India? What were the strategic devices adopted in the construction of forts to confuse or defeat the enemy?
5. Which forms of secular architecture evolved during medieval times? What significance did these buildings have in the socio-cultural lives of contemporary people?
6. How does Mandu showcase the fact that humans adapt to their environment?
7. In spite of being unfinished how does Gol Gumbad symbolise the grandeur and majesty of Indo-Islamic architecture?
8. Which are the places where the dead are buried? How do these differ from each other?
9. Why is the word 'perfection' associated with the Taj Mahal?

PROJECT



© NCERT not to be republished

GLOSSARY

Agate	A fine-grained variegated chalcedony, its colours arranged in stripes, blended in clouds, or showing moss like forms
Amalaka	Ribbed, lenticular or globoid part resembling the *amala* (Indian gooseberry fruit) crowning the top of the North Indian style *shikhara*
Anda	Semi-circular structure typically used for Buddhist *stupa*
Arabesque	An ornamental design consisting of intertwined flowing lines, leaves and flowers, a feature of the Indo-Islamic architecture
Ardhmandap	Semi-hall in front of *garbhagriha* of the temple
Ashtadikpalas	Guardians of the eight directions
Ayudhas	Weapons
Batter	Slope in the wall
Bodhisattva	In Buddhism, Bodhisattva refers to the previous births of Gautam Buddha
Bosses	Circular embossed decorations, usually in stone of contrasting colours located on either side of an arch and within the spandrels
Buddhism	A religion originated in the sixteenth century BCE with the preachings of Buddha
Burin	A pointed tool of flint or stone with a transverse edge made by the removal of one or more flakes. Used for working bone, antler and ivory, and, perhaps, for engraving
CE	Common Era, replacing AD or Anno Domini (Era of the Lord)
Calligraphy	The art of producing decorative handwriting
Caturasra	Square
Chhatra	Umbrella-like structure on top of the *stupa*
Chhatri	Cupola resting on four pillars with a dome or pyramid-shaped roof
Chahar Bagh	A square, walled garden divided into four by intersecting water channels
Chaitya Arch	Semi-circular arch with pointed tip in the centre towards the top
Chaitya	Place of congregation and worship
Chakra	Wheel, a symbol used for Buddha's first sermon at Sarnath
Chamfer	To cut off the edge or corner, thereby, increasing the number of sides

© NCERT not to be republished

Chert	A flint-like material, usually black or dark brown in colour. Although it has a conchoidal fracture like flint it is not so fine-textured
Chevron Patterning	V-shaped patterns
Corbel	The stone or wooden bracket laid horizontally to support a cornice or an arch
Cornice	A moulded roof-line
Crystal	A high quality, clear, colourless glass or an object, especially a vessel or ornament, made of such glass
Dado panel	Lower part of the interior wall when it is finished differently from the rest of the wall. Some excellent examples are Hoyasal temples of Halebid, Jamali Kamali tomb in Mehrauli and Turkish Sultan's palace in Fatehpur Sikri, Agra
Dargah	Shrine of a Sufi saint, where the saint's grave called *mazar* is located
Dhammachakrapravartan	First sermon by Buddha at Sarnath near Varanasi
Dravid	Normally used for people, culture, language and architectural style of South India
Dressed stone	Stone which is cut to size and polished
Encaustic tile work	Inlay in ceramics
Faience	Blue-coloured artificial glass-like material. Faience was used in a variety of ornaments and pieces of jewellery
Gahapati	Big land-owner or big farmer involved in farming and trade
Garbhgriha	Sanctum sanctorum
Gopuram	Main gateway; the storeyed structure over the entrance or entrances through the enclosing walls to the premises of a temple
Harmika	Small square fencing atop the *anda* or semi-circular dome of stupa
Imam	The person who leads a Muslim congregation in prayers. Over a passage of time, this position became hereditary
Intaglio	The process of cutting a design into the surface of a small hard stone or gem
Jagmohan	Rectangular or square hall in front of a sanctuary or main temple — a term used for temple architecture of Odisha
Jainism	One of the most ancient religions, it is a path of victory (jina) over life's stream of rebirths through ethical and spiritual practices.

© NCERT not to be republished

Jali	Ornamental, perforated lattice screens with arabesques, star motifs and other geometric designs such as pentagons, hexagons, octagons and circles
Jasper	A variety of quartz that may be red, yellow or brown; long used for jewellery and ornamentation
Jataka	Stories of the previous births of Buddha
Jati	Caste
Kalash	Wide-mouthed pot; ornamental pot-design decorating the *shikhara* of a temple
Keystone	A central stone at the summit of an arch
Kos minar	Distance marker or milestone in the shape and size of a tower
Kuta	A shrine of square plan
Lapis lazuli	A rich blue semi-precious stone. The main source in the ancient world was the mountains of Badakshan, northern Afghanistan, from where it was traded widely. Lapis lazuli was used as inlay in ornaments, jewellery, seals, etc.
Linga	Phallus, the form in which Lord Shiva is being worshipped
Mahamandapa	Big hall in the temple
Mahaparinibban	Death of Lord Buddha — liberating him from the cycle of life and death
Mandap	Hall
Maqbara	Mausoleum or tomb
Medallion	Circular discs in the spandrels of arches decorated with motifs or calligraphy
Mihrab	Prayer niche indicating the direction of Mecca
Mimbar	Stepped pulpit in the Jama Masjid or Friday mosque from where the *Khutba* was read
Mukhlinga	Phallus with face
Multiple foliations	Many curves in an arch
Mural	Paintings made on the walls of caves, buildings or temples in Fresco or any other style
Nagara	North Indian style temple architecture
Naqqar khana	Drum house from where ceremonial music was played which was usually situated over the gate. It was a popular feature in Mughal palace-complexes
Natyamandapa or Rangmandapa	Dancing hall in front part of the temple
Panchayatana	Main temple surrounded by four sub-shrines in each corner

© NCERT not to be republished

Pendentive	A triangular bracket in the angle of two walls, connecting the base of the dome to its supporting arches
Phamsana	A buildings/ temple which tends to be broader and shorter than Latina type
Pietra-dura	Pictorial mosaic work using semi-precious stones. Found on walls, cenotaphs and marble *jalis* in the Taj Mahal
Polychrome	An object or a work composed of or decorated in many colours
Pradakshina	Circumambulation
Qibla Liwan	The wall of the mosque in the direction of Mecca
Qila-i Kuhna Masjid	Built by Humayun or Sher Shah between 1530 and 1545, it is located inside Purana Qila in Delhi
Quartz	A variety of stone found in many parts of the world and variously used for toolmaking and in ceremonial contexts. Varieties of quartz include agate, chalcedony, chert, flint, opal and rock crystal
Rekhaprasad or Latina	This type of temple has square *shikhar* at the base and its walls curve slowly inward towards the top
Rupkar/Shilpi	Artisan
Sabha Mandapa	Assembly hall
Saracenic	A style of architecture popular with Muslims in West Asia particularly from the eleventh to the fourteenth century
Sarai	*Dharamshala* or a traveller's lodge
Shala ayatasara	Elliptical
Shikhar	Superstructure above the *garbhagriha* in the north Indian style of temple
Shilpa texts	Ancient Indian texts/manuals describing the elements and principles of art and architecture to be practised by artists
Shraman	A Buddhist or Jain sect, whose followers used to wander from place to place
Sovereignty	The authority of a ruler/state to govern himself/ itself absolutely independently
Spandrels	The almost triangular space between two sides of the outer curves of an arch and a rectangular enclosure
Squinch	An arch spanning the corners of a square chamber and acting as support for a dome
Steatite	A greyish or greenish stone, which is generally soft and can easily be worked to make figurines, vessels, seals and other objects

© NCERT not to be republished

Stellate	Arch nets arranged in a radiating pattern like that of a star
Sthapati	Architect
Stupa	A mound-like structure containing relics of Buddha or Buddhist monks worshipped by Buddhists
Stucco	A fine plaster used for coating wall surfaces
Suzerainty	A sovereign/state having some control over another ruler/state who/that is internally autonomous
Tablet	A regularly shaped, separate panel, or a representation thereof, often bearing an inscription or image
Terracotta	Literally, 'baked earth' mainly used to refer to fairly coarse, porous clay that, when fired, assumes a colour ranging from dull ochre to red
Tessellation	Decoration on walls and floors with mosaic
Torans	Carved, serpentine-shaped ceremonial gateways
Trefoil	Three curves in an arch
Turquoise	A semi-precious stone, sky blue to pale green in colour, highly prized for its use in jewellery by many ancient cultures
Valabhi	Sub-type of *nagara* temple
Vanga	Ancient name of the Bengal region
Varna	Four-fold division of the society based on profession i.e. *Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra* during ancient India
Vesara	Term used for the independent style of the temple during the time of the Chalukyas of Karnataka. It consists of a combination of the northern (*nagara*) and southern (*dravida*) styles
Vihara	Place of residence of Buddhist monk
Vijanain	Temples having a rectangular building with a roof that rises into a vaulted chamber
Viman	Superstructure over the *garbhagriha* of shrine in the south Indian temples
Volute	A scroll or spiral ornament on a pillar
Voussoir	A wedge-shaped or tapered stone used to construct an arch
Vritta	Circular
Yakshas/Yakshanis	Demi-gods and demi-goddesses — protectors of nature and resources

© NCERT not to be republished

Notes

© NCERT not to be republished

Notes

© NCERT not to be republished